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241 782 The first of the rice-harvest is pounded in a mortar. A chicken is killed, or, if the farmer is a man of some means, he may offer two chickens, which are stewed together with red beans. The rice, cooked separately, is put on one platter or in a calabash and the stew in another, and these are taken to the field, where they are cast to the four quarters of the earth. Some of this is also given to the spirit residing in any stream which may be on the property. In addition, sacred trees are [778] [824] rewarded for their care over the field with some of this food placed at the foot of each, but only after they have demonstrated their merit by a successful yield. A prayer of thanks, [539] couched in terms such as these, is next pronounced:

> *"Tout ça quitté. Aidé moin à travailler durant l'année, quitté ba moin force, courage. Moin bien content jodi-a, main ça moin porté ba-ou, c'e pou' ca toujou' bon. Ba moin force l'année pou' moin travaille plus l'année prochain. Merci.* — All this remains [here for you]. Help me to work during the year, give me strength and courage. Today I am well satisfied; here is what I bring you that all may always be well with me. Give me strength this year that I may work more next year. Thank you."

The family and their friends who may be present then return to the house and eat the remaining food.

241 782 262 It is also held dangerous to eat yams until the spirits are given the first of the new crop that comes to hand.[1] This is true even though a person may not himself be a farmer, but purchases his yams in the market. Unless this is done: *" Cap' malade, cap' tué même. Marassa kèmbé 'ou, morts, too, et mystères.* — You can become ill, you can even die. Twins will seize (molest) you; the dead, too, and the *mystères."* The ceremony occurs during November or December, and in addition to the " Guinea " yams — for this ceremony is not performed for the great coarse yams — it is necessary to have imported dried salt fish, fish from Haitian waters which are dried

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trance of the house — three times if there is one door (for the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost), three times before each door if there are two entrances, and once before each door if there are three. The wedding procession goes to church on foot. The men, if they are from the countryside, are stiff, uncomfortable, and hot in their unaccustomed "best" clothing and their often painful shoes, while the women are also self-conscious in their new dresses. The elaborateness of the ceremony varies with the fee paid the priest, but at all events the clanging church bell is heard notifying the town and its environs that a marriage is being consecrated.

If the family of the bride or groom are well known in Mirebalais, a wedding reception may be given at their house for friends of the couple and of their parents, but the real festivities are held after the return to the new family home. As the procession approaches it, the "bush-priest," a functionary who, because of his knowledge of French, can read the prayers of the Church, waits at the gate with two aides, small boys or girls, each with a flag, one red and one white. He has sacred water in one hand and a lighted candle in the other, and as he pours this water on the ground three times he intones the Pater Noster, the Ave Maria, the Credo, and other prayers. These concluded, hymns are sung by all the participants, and singing, a procession is formed with the "bush-priest" in the lead, followed by the flag-bearers, the couple who have just been married, arm in arm, the "godfather" and "godmother" of the marriage, as the witnesses are called, the parents of the bride and groom, and other close relatives. As the procession reaches the door of the house, it pauses and water is thrown on the ground three times; the circuit of the house is made twice again, and each time, as the door is reached, water is thrown, until, the third tour completed, the participants solemnly enter.

There coffee, liqueurs, wine, *kola*, and cakes are served to the principals and the more important members of the com-

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Simple annual rites are held for the gods in January, each family giving small offerings in its house of worship to its own deities. These minor ceremonies are not to be confused with the extended rituals which a family may perform but once in a decade or a generation. Because of the extensive preparation and large outlay these entail, such rites are often postponed from year to year. According to some, this postponement is sought through an *action de grâce*, based on Church ritual, while others maintain that it is but necessary on his special day to appeal to the deity who is troubling the family, give a small offering — a *mangé sec* — and ask for the desired respite. This may be done several times, until crop failures, sudden deaths, and the loss of valuable property begin to afflict the family, whereupon the family head seeks out a *hungan*, who by divination determines the supernatural forces that are responsible for these misfortunes; and when his statement that the gods have reached the end of their patience is confirmed independently by several other priests who are consulted, active preparations for the major rite are finally set in motion.

Any such important ceremony must be held on the ancestral habitation, and centers in the *maison de servitude*, the family house of service for the gods. The house itself, to be differentiated from the *humfort*, or "temple" of the *vodun* priest, may be elaborate or simple in accordance with the status of family members in the *vodun* cult.[3] At one end of the sacred house is a platform about two and one half feet high on which are placed calabash plates for the *loa*, six for the Créole deities, three for the Mystères Guinée, and a white plate with a "thunder stone," or Neolithic celt, and a necklace for Damballa. Not all *cailles mystères* are painted, but some, it is said, are green "for hope," and some red "for victory," while one was said to have designs of flowers and snakes painted on the wall above the platform.[3] These houses usually have two rectangular rooms, each with a separate entrance and each having its platform at the narrow end facing the doorway. One of

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the rooms is consecrated to the *loa*, the other to the spirits of twins and the family dead. If the house is a large one with three rooms, the third will be for the Congo *loa*. It was also said that occasionally such places of worship reserve one room for the Rada deities, a second for the Pétro *loa*, and the third for the Congo gods, the dead and twins being worshipped elsewhere. For the Ibo gods, however, it is agreed in Mirebalais that there is never a separate room. But whether the gods are worshipped in a single-room thatched shelter or a more impressive "temple" with a metal roof, none of the major categories of supernatural powers are neglected.

In the main, large ceremonies are concerned with the task of restraining, or less often of pacifying, deities that have been molesting a family, and of making content those who have been demonstrating their goodwill toward the group. Such rites must be sharply differentiated from the ordinary *vodun* dance which, coming after the family ritual, forms but a part of this complex, and serves to express joy at the dangers averted and gratitude for the good that the friendly *loa* are to bring. At the ceremony drums may or may not be employed; at *vodun* dances they are indispensable. Possession is induced at the ceremony by the *hungan's* invocations; at the dance by the rhythm of the drums. The ceremony is attended only by members of the family and those who are specially invited; invitations to the *vodun* dance are broadcast over the countryside, and all take part in the social phases of the evening. For the ceremony, sacrifices not alone of cereals and drinks but also of the blood of animals are provided; at the *vodun* dance only minor offerings are given. And while both types of ritual are a part of a single functioning religious system, it is at the first where the most important end is achieved, that of obtaining protection from hostile gods and gaining the favor of those who are friendly.

The pattern of the ceremony — called a *service loa* — is sufficiently definite to allow a generalized version to be given.

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based on the rituals that were observed. In every case at least two major officiants are necessary, the *prêt' savaine* and the *houngan*, though the role of the latter is the all-important one. Last-minute preparations are made during the final morning, but what is needed will have been accumulated over a period of many months. Tables to hold offerings — sometimes two, sometimes more — are arranged at the sacred places on the family habitation, usually near streams or great trees where the gods reside. Eggs, cereals, drinks, and cornmeal — the food of the gods — are brought, and the animals to be sacrificed are tethered near by. Early in the afternoon the family, dressed in white, assemble, while the *vodun* priest with cornmeal describes on the ground the cabalistic designs called *vever*, and he sees to it that all has its proper place on the altar, whether it be the ever-present crucifix, or the chromolithographs of the saints, or the bottles of "drink" — usually non-alcoholic — or cereals and flour of various kinds. Consecrated water must be on hand, particularly at the big "altar," as the table covered by a canopy to protect the sacred objects is called.

The first part of the ceremony is an *action de grâce*, which in Mirebalais requires an hour or more, but which is said to last two or three hours in southern Haiti. This ritual, entirely derived from the litany of the Church, must always precede any *vodun* ceremony of the kind being considered here. Its purpose is said "to set the *loa* in movement" and to notify them of the rites that are to come, but psychologically it also serves to assure the participants that they are not proceeding to the worship of African gods without having paid friendly homage to God, the ruler of the universe, and the saints. The songs and prayers are brought to a close by an *adoration*, when offerings of money are made by members of the family to pay the officiant. At this point the songs change to a more African rhythm, and the *vodun* priest takes active charge.

As darkness falls, on the first day of the rite, he summons the

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cattle and all other animals when the river floods. Rituals involving these larger sacrifices, however, are held only on the rarest of occasions, and are thus much less common than the ceremony which, typical of those witnessed, may now be described.

This *service* was held in a habitation southwest of Mirebalais, across the Tombe River in the foothills of the mountains. It was said to be the first ceremony of its kind given by this family, and would not have to be repeated for a generation or more. The immediate cause was the occurrence of numerous illnesses and deaths. When members independently consulted their *hungans* to discover the reason for these misfortunes, they were informed that the family *loa* demanded such a rite. Finally one priest, more powerful than the others, became possessed and described in great detail the type of ceremony that was desired: of how many days' duration, the number and kind of sacrifices, what gods were to be called, which troublesome ones must be "sent away" or "restrained," and those of the friendly *loa* who were to be fed.

The entire ritual was conducted out of doors, and at about half past four in the afternoon of Thursday, 5 July, 1934, when first seen, the *action de grâce* had already begun. It was being chanted by the *prêt' savanne*, a bespectacled, middle-aged man, who read from an old prayerbook, while the *hungan* sat quietly by. The officiant was standing in a cleared space with his back toward a grove of trees, facing the "altar." Opposite was a grassy slope, which was separated from this grove by a brook where the Malt' Source lives who watches over the habitation of the family. A white banner hung high in one of the trees a little behind the altar.

This altar, called the *trône*, was a table covered with a white cloth, spread over a frame to form a canopy sheltering its sides and back. A black cloth was beneath the white covering. Under the table a wooden bowl — a *gamelle* — contained water in which sacred leaves had been steeped; near it was a

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calabash filled with bananas, millet, rice, beans, egg-plant, and squash. On the table, under the canopy, were a crucifix and holy water, lighted white candles, a lamp of palm oil in a drinking-glass with a floating wick, food — rice cooked in milk, a stew of rice and beans, cooked chicken — and sweetened drinks — *kola*, and orange drinks among the rest, together with small drinking-glasses containing coffee. In addition, roasted and grilled corn, pineapples, fig-bananas, cassava, and sirup could be seen. Fastened to the inside of the canopy were *images*, chromolithographs depicting the saints, there being represented, among others, the Mater Dolorosa (for Erzilie, in honor of those long dead), Our Mother of Perpetual Aid, St. James and St. Anthony. Some thirty feet away, under a palm tree, was another table, for Simbi, without a canopy, on which also stood various cooked and uncooked foods. Still farther away was the "first" table, the most important in the ceremony, for Bosu. It likewise held food and drink; while near it was a large fire, the all-important *boucan* for Legba. The sacrifices, tethered to trees not far from the *trône*, consisted of animals and fowls: one very large black boar, two smaller black pigs, and a black goat, a black turkey, a guinea-hen, two white pigeons, and several chickens, including a black one with ruffled feathers and a number of varicolored ones.

During the Catholic-like ritual the singing, led by the *prêt savanne*, was desultory. The members of the family, some twenty-five persons, were gathered directly in front of the *trône*. From time to time the leader, holding a lighted candle in his hand, would pour water into a small depression that had been dug directly in front of the altar. All knelt for the prayers, the Pater Noster, the Credo, the Ave Maria, and for the long *adoration* and benediction. Throughout this *action de grâce* and much of the rest of the ceremony, two women *hunsi* in white, members of the family, waved red and white banners before the *trône* or later before the table where rit-

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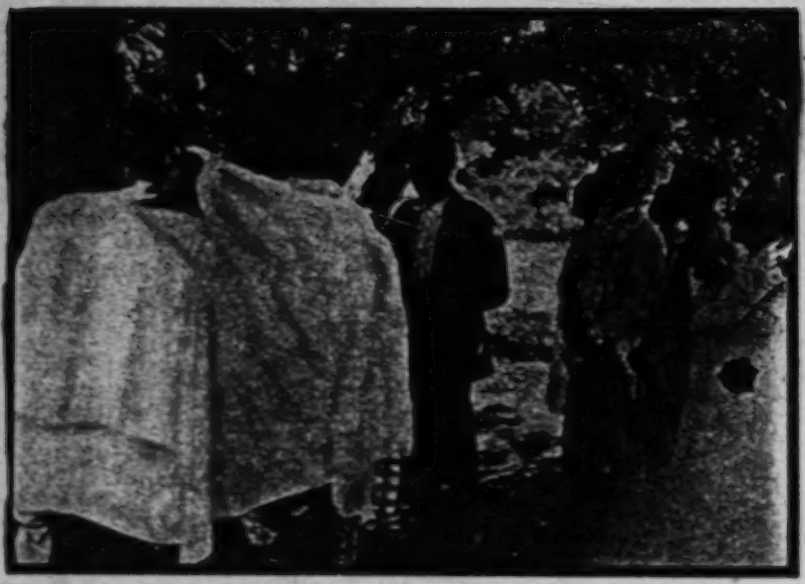

ABOVE, *An* action de grâce *preceding a* vodun *service, when prayers of the Church are read by the* prêt' savanne.

BELOW, *As the* vodun *priest takes over, he twirls a member of the family to bring on possession.*

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ABOVE, *The possessed woman offering a candle and pouring sanctified water before the altar.*

BELOW, *The* vodun *priest exhorting the possessed woman.*

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fore never return to trouble the living. As witness to this, he was now putting the cross in place, " which causes everything that is evil to flee," to remain until it rotted away.

Simbi djo was " restrained " where the *trône* had been; Lemba under the mango tree near the place of the table for Bosu. Some of the meat of the pigs was buried in these places with all other kinds of cooked food, and the gods were told that they were to repose there for from seven to seventeen years, after which they would again be fed. A cross of iron was buried with the cooked meat, and as each jar, both now and earlier, was put in place, this song was sung:

Poussé allé,	Get you gone,
Poussé allé,	Get you gone,
Icit pas pays ou.	This is not your country.
Ça lan Guinée,	It is Guinée,
Qui pays ou.	That is your country.

A violent rain-storm not only made it impossible to reach the place of the ceremony the following day, but also made it necessary for the family to defer all but a few of the more essential rites. The second day's ritual was thereupon put over to Saturday, when according to original intentions the *vodun* dance that had been planned to close this complex of ceremonies was to have occurred, but which in consequence was postponed until some weeks later.

The ritual of the second day of this *cérémonie* began much earlier than that of the first, for by about one-thirty in the afternoon the *action de grâce* was almost completed. As one approached, a newly dug mound of earth with a cross over it where the troublesome deities had been buried was to be seen just outside the land belonging to the family. The cross was draped with a black cloth, and was itself painted blue and white, while a rosary and a magic *garde* of native twine were suspended from it.

On this afternoon the ritual was performed in two places, a

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spot somewhat farther down the stream than the site of the earlier ceremony, and later at the family habitation on the hill. There was one table arranged as a *trône* and under its canopy, beside the *images*, the candles, and the crucifix, were white foods such as rice and white beans. Instead of Pétro *loa*, this time the ceremony was to bring Rada gods who were to be asked for children, good health, and good fortune. The *trône* was just below the confluence of two brooks, near some great palm trees. Near by was a weir, while in the larger stream, below the point of juncture, were two small natural pools.

When the *action de grâce*, which did not differ from that witnessed earlier, was ended, the *hungan* again made his *verver*, and these were yet richer in design than on the previous occasion. As he finished he took a number of the women of the family by the right hand, spinning each in turn several times to induce possession. The *loa* Damballa Siligwe "came" almost at once, possessing a woman who threw herself into the stream, threshing about as a "serpent." No one troubled himself to attend to her, however, as she emerged and walked about in her wet clothes behind the *trône* and in front of it, so that, according to the *hungan*, the *loa* became angry and would not come, thus making it necessary to sing many more songs of praise and entreaty. As he sang, the *hungan* seized one member of the family after another by the hand, spinning them about and making them kneel before the *trône* to bring the *loa*.

Moin dit Gran',	I say, Gran',
Bonjou', Gran',	Good-day, Gran',
Bonjou', bonjou'.	Good-day, good-day.
Enfants, la yo, Gran',	It is their children, Gran',
Qui ap mandé coumen nous ye-e,	Who ask how you are,
Enfants yo	Their children
Qui ap dit bonjou'.	Who say good-day.

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796 534 533 [198] skin, are played in batteries of three, the largest being called *manman*,[3] the middle the *seconde*, and the smallest the *bula*.[4] To be used in dances, the drums, like the *loa* of the worshippers, must be "baptized," as will be seen when an account of their making and consecration is given in a later chapter. The iron, or *ogan*, usually consists of the blade of a hoe struck by a large spike, and the rattle, *açon*, in the form most often encountered, is a rounded calabash, containing seeds or pebbles. The iron and the rattles set the basic, steady beat about which the complex drum rhythms play. The smallest drum first takes the time after the iron and the rattles have begun, the notes being played with an accessory figure by means of two thin sticks. The medium-sized drum is next heard, while the *manman*, ritually the most important of the three, comes in last. The *seconde* also has two sticks, one short, thick, and straight, the other a small bow, which gives an added resilience to the notes of the drums' subsidiary rhythms. In playing the great drum, the single crooked stick, called a *baguette*, is held in the right hand, while the left strikes the drumhead with heel or fingers according to the quality of tone desired. The drumstick itself is wielded either against the skin head or against its wooden side, thus permitting a further variation in tone.

796 796 533 When "salutes" to the gods are called for by the drums, it is the voice of the *manman* that signals the sweeping circular movements of the dancers, dictating with its beat the dips and semi-prostrations of this figure in the ritual dancing, called *asagwe*. The drum rhythms are always distinctive for each type of *loa*, and every devotee knows the rhythms which call his god.

796 534 [198] The drums and iron are the focus of all activity of the dance, especially since those who are possessed dance facing the drums, in whose beat is heard the voice of the gods. Hence the spectators cluster most closely about them, for anything of significance which happens must happen here. The players of the rattles — it is but rarely that more than one rattle is not

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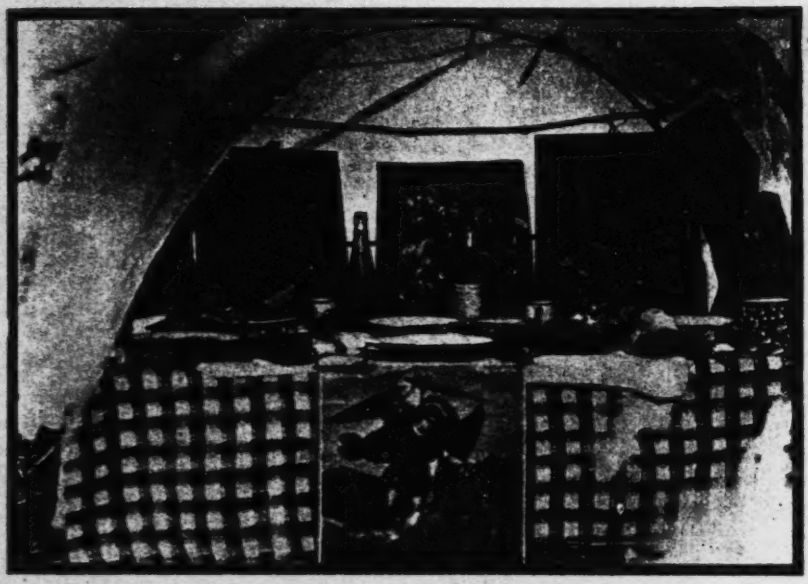

ABOVE, *A* vodun *altar: both Catholic and African religious symbols are to be seen.*
BELOW, *Mystical designs traced in cornmeal on the ground about a shrine.*

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ample, long before ordinary folk.[3] If promised offerings in the event of an ample harvest, their aid in bringing about this desired end is even more fruitful than that of the *loa* or the dead, who are therefore appealed to only indirectly.

Twins, however, are capricious beings, ready to do harm if they are not humored. Consequently, twins must be given anything they ask for, and it is especially important to provide them with the clothes they covet, when giving a *mangé marassa*. If their father fails to provide these new clothes, they will *kembé* (seize) him, and he may at once have an attack of fever or a bad toothache or earache; or, more likely still, he will be seriously constipated, since this is the punishment particularly favored by the *marassa*, just as the *loa* most frequently send dysentery, and the dead cause headaches. If lack of resources makes it impossible to provide what they demand, a painstaking explanation must be given them or they will drive a person mad in the manner recounted in the following *marassa* myth:

> There were once twins, one good and one evil. They were working a field with another brother, but the evil one refused to help. The other two, therefore, said they would not give him any food. Because of this the evil twin drove the third brother insane. After they had long prayed that he reconsider, he finally agreed to restore sanity to his brother, but insisted on inflicting deafness as a punishment, so that this brother was deaf until he died.

At the birth of twins, special "twin plates" are provided when their birth is announced to the *loa* — either before or after their Church baptism — where offerings to the spirits of twins are placed. Usually paired, the plates may be three in number, in which case the third is for the *dosu*, the child born after twins, who is believed to be even more powerful than twins themselves and is thus an important figure in the cult.

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Preferably, these cult objects are made of pottery, joined by a ligature in twos or threes, as required. The plates rest in a box or on a small table which stands in a corner of an inner room of the house. If the family worshipping the twins is a poor one, joined calabashes or wooden plates are acceptable, and such are found more often in the valley of Mirebalais than pottery plates. The "altar" made by the plates is completed by an *image* — a chromolithograph — of the twin saints, Comas and Damien, placed on the wall above them.

The principal rite of the twin cult is the *mangé marassa*. A minor ceremony, if the family has living twins or twins recently dead, it is held, as has already been said, at Christmas and at harvest time; otherwise only at Christmas. Yams and salt fish are separately cooked, and a dish of beans mixed with olive oil is provided. In the morning this food is taken to a closed room, where it is deposited both in the *marassa* plates and in ordinary containers placed for those who attend the rite. As the offering is made, songs such as the following are sung:

Marassa, m'a pé mandé,	Spirit of twins, I ask,
Ça wé la si 'ou content?	Are you content with what you see there?
Ago-e-e.	*Ago-e-e.*
Adoré nan pié Damballa,	Worship at the tree of Damballa,
Ago-e-e.	*Ago-e-e.*
Marassa bra,	Twins of the forest,
Marassa carrefour,	Twins of the crossroad,
M'a pé mandé,	I ask,
Ça wé la si 'ou content?	Are you content with what you see there?
Adoré nan pié humfort,	Worship at the *humfort*,
Assuré-e, ago!	Care for us, *ago!*
Marassa dé, trois, quatre,	Twins two, three, four,

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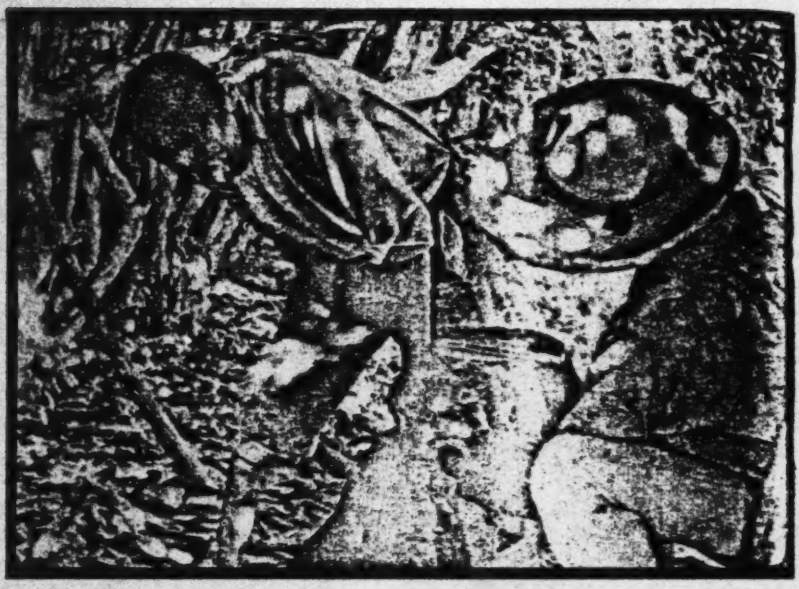

ABOVE, *Making the* vodun *drum: stretching the cow-hide heads.*

BELOW, *Consecrating the drums: they must be "dressed," like anyone who is baptized.*

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nected with them, much of African tradition which has carried over into Haitian religious life has been retained in pure form. Yet the intrusion of Catholic custom into these African patterns — often noted, though generally in passing — also must be studied if the significance of the forms of Haitian folk-religion is to be grasped. That this aspect of *vodun* has received the scant attention it has had is probably to be ascribed to two causes.[3] The first takes the Catholic element for granted, so that even where a particularly dramatic element of Catholic practice is seen in an African setting, such as a crucifix or the portraits of the saints on a *vodun* altar, specific mention is made of this without attempting to dissect its historic or psychological role. The second reason for the comparative disregard of Catholic influence is that for Europeans it is a commonplace. Spirit possession and sacrifices, African song and drum rhythms are more "exciting" than prayers or hymns of the Church. Underlying both these causes is the deep-rooted and unquestioned assumption that, in contact with any non-European culture, the patterns that govern European behavior must prevail. Consequently, is it not in the nature of things that Catholicism should have taken root in the *vodun* cult? Is not rather the matter to be stressed that African traditions should have been retained at all? That the process should actually have been one of amalgamation rather than of dominance is rarely taken into account. Yet to go deeper into the significance of this process in Haitian life is to open far-reaching vistas.

An outstanding sanction taken by the *vodun* cult from Catholicism is that of the baptismal rites. Though ceremonies of consecration are a commonplace in Africa, and the African ritual of washing the head — *lavé tête*, as it is termed — has not been forgotten, in Mirebalais the importance of baptism as a means whereby human beings obtain their place in this world and in the next has been carried over and applied to all matters of ceremonial significance. Thus just as in the lives of

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the saints of the Church the sacrament of baptism was a crucial rite, so the *loa* must be baptized before they become forces which act in a recognized and predictable manner. Just as the objects used in the rituals of the Church must be sanctified by being blessed and sprinkled with holy water, so in the *vodun* cult a *humfort*, the drums, the iron, and the rattle must all undergo a similar sanctification, not only that they may possess proper supernatural power, but more importantly that they may perform their functions in the very serious and African matter of calling the *loa* and placating the supernatural beings of the *vodun* cult.

Herein lies the importance of the *prêt' savanne*. Since the official representatives of the Church not only have nothing to do with the *vodun* cult, but excoriate it on all occasions, the *prêt' savanne*, as a man who can read the prayers of the Church, plays an indispensable role and to that extent is to be regarded as a functioning member of the *vodun* cult, despite the fact that he has no control over the *loa* and, as far as was observed, does not participate actively in their worship. At the same time, it must not be inferred that in borrowing "baptism" from the Church this rite has been elevated to the most important place in the ritual of the *vodun* cult, for though the *prêt' savanne* must read prayers "from the book" and sprinkle his holy water, the actual "baptizing" is carried out by the *hungan*. In sanctifying a *humfort*, the end in view is to induce the *loa* to come after the baptism and to insure that no unaccountable or untoward deeds may come to pass within it. Similarly, though drums must be baptized with Church prayers and holy water that they may perform their allotted tasks, without the concomitant ritual of the *hungan* they would be no more empowered to call the gods than they were before the prayers of the Church were read over them. An analogous comparison can be made between the role of the *prêt' savanne* and that of the *hungan* in the *service*. Since the world

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is ruled by God, it is necessary to invoke God with the ritual of His Church before the rites to placate the *loa* may begin. But the important business of the occasion is to placate the *loa*, and it is only when the *hungan* takes over from the *prêt' savanne* that the series of rituals commence which, for the Haitian, hold emotional force and psychological value.

In the description of the baptism of a *loa* given in a preceding chapter, the use of Church ritual in bringing the African spirits under control will be remembered. No clearer illustration can be given of this merging of traditions than in a detailed account of the manner of making and validating *vodun* drums. These drums are of the characteristic African hollow-log type, with skin heads held in place and tuned by means of pegs, which are tied fast about the drumhead with cord. Before the tree which furnished the bodies was cut, an invocation was pronounced by their maker and an offering — a *mangé sec* — was made, that all the gods might come when called by the finished drums. A candle was lighted and *verver* described about the base of the tree. Eggs, broken against the trunk, were rubbed on the bark; while both soft and alcoholic drinks were given as libations, since not all the gods desire the same refreshment. After the tree had been felled and that part of the trunk that was needed for the drums was cut off, the maker was free to proceed with shaping the bodies of the drums by first gouging out the inside of the trunk, then stripping the bark, and finally carving the characteristic foot at the base. Before the next step of boring the holes for the pegs was taken, *clairin* was poured inside each drum, at the entrance to the habitation of the maker, and toward the man's cornfield. The first hole bored in each drum was carefully marked, for this was the significant *manman*. Here the first peg is inserted; the skin head is first attached here; and here the cord about the head is first knotted; while it is the peg in this hole that must always be first struck when the completed drum is tuned.

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
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534 782 778 The drumheads were cut from a large ox-hide, purchased in the market place. In the early morning sunlight another "little ceremony" was performed before they were attached. Placing the three unheaded bodies of the drums in a row, with the iron in its place, the maker poured *clairin* before each, and having cut a native candle in three pieces, he took them in his left hand as he crossed himself, saying: "*Au nom d' Père, au nom d' Fils, au nom d' Saint Esprit.*" He then [788] lighted the three wicks, and taking each lighted candle in turn in his right hand, he made the sign of the cross with it and attached it to the "mother peg" of each drum. There the flames were allowed to flicker for a moment before the work of heading the drums began.

534 The hide was first attached to the "mother peg," then to the one opposite, and then to the two at right angles to the first pair. This is hard work, for to obtain the proper degree of initial tautness several men must strain at the resistant hide, and that is why four cuts are made where a peg is to go instead of the three that are needed, for frequently a strip breaks and the extra hole is used to re-thread the peg. The great drum has nine pegs, the one of medium size seven, and the small one six, not five, "because the *boula* is a thief, taking the beat away from the iron." The head was cut away from the rest of the great ox-hide only after it was in place. The final step was to knot the cord — braided the day before, of native sisal — to the *manman* peg of each drum, and then to twine it eight, six, or five times about their bodies.

534 778 788 The drums, now finished, were then put aside for a week to allow the damp heads to dry, awaiting the final sanctification. During this period they could not be played. It was held unwise to do more than tap them lightly with the finger-nail to test their resonance and the extent to which the heads were dry. Meanwhile preparations were being made for the bap- [292] tism. Drums, like human beings, must be clothed when they appear in public, and *rades*, apron-like garments, a white bro-

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
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cade for Damballa, a red print for Ogun, and a third, a flowered blue material, for all the other gods, were first made. They were ruffled at the bottom, with strips of the material, attached as are apron-strings, to hold them in place. Four eggs, three "native" candles, three white candles, white flour, corn flour, two cassava cakes, two biscuits, three small-sized loaves of bread, two bottles of *kola*, *clairin*, and holy water, were also provided for the baptism. Finally on the appointed day — a Saturday, so that the drums could afterwards be used for a *vodun* dance — the drums, drumsticks, and iron, with the dresses and the food that had been provided for the ceremony, were taken to the scene of the rite, a habitation where a *tonnelle* had been built for the accompanying dance.

The ceremony began at about five o'clock in the afternoon, the drums being dressed by their godmothers. Just as a child who is to be baptized in church must have godparents, so drums must have their godparents, and following the logic of this position, since the owner of the drums is regarded as their father, he uses the terms *compère* and *commère* for those who have "stood up" with his drums, just as he would for those who might sponsor his children. The *prêt' savanne* first called for some twigs from an orange tree and a bit of cotton, as the drums, standing on end, were covered with a clean white cloth. Grouped about them and ranged behind the officiant were the owner and godparents of the drums, holding lighted candles in their hands, with which they made the sign of the cross from time to time. As the prayers began, the participants crossed themselves, and the *prêt' savanne* sprinkled the drums with holy water, using a spray of orange-leaves. Among his prayers were the Credo, the Ave Maria, the Pater Noster, and the Salve, interspersed with hymns sung by the assembled group. After about half an hour of prayer the officiant, holding an egg in his hand, made the sign of the cross three times over each of the drumheads. Ordinarily the eggs would have been broken, their contents rubbed on the drum-

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
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534 heads, and *clairin* poured over these, but on this occasion the
● 778 rite was postponed, for the eggs would have dampened the
788 drumheads so they could not have been played for the evening's dance. Yet this deviation from the strict ritual did not permit any laxity in meeting the obligation when promised — that is, the day following the dance.

534 The *hungan* took charge as soon as the prayers were fin-
778 ished. Placing the drums to form a triangle on the ground,
788 with the iron, rattles, and sticks near by, he put the offerings
793 inside the space enclosed by the bodies, and with white cornmeal made *verver* about them, while at the foot of each drum he placed an egg; then, covering the drums with a clean cloth, he threw parched corn on it. From time to time he interrupted his silent invocations by ringing a bell held in one hand, until the arrival of the time for the vehement haggling over the price of his services, which interrupted the ritual.

[552] This matter settled, he asked for the names to be given the drums, and proceeded to "christen" the small one Gran' Siligbo, the middle-sized Damballa, and the great drum Ogun Shango. At this point, were the owner desirous of having special powers given his drums, as is frequently the case, the *hungan* would endow them with a *n'âme,* or soul, at the same time instructing the spirit of the drums, called *huntôr,* in what was desired of it, and prescribing what must be given the drums by their owner to make their powers effective. But in this case no such *n'âme* was asked, and the ceremony continued.

Summoning the gods, he lifted the cloth over the drums and instructed the "father" to pour water in three places between them, to set the drums on end, and to beat one of them. This was the *seconde,* called Damballa, and its having been initially struck indicated that the god after whom it was
534 named was most important for this set. This ended the cere-
778 mony of baptism, and the drummers took charge so that the
782 evening's dance might begin, for now the drums were ready

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
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for all uses to which those of their type are put. During their making and after their completion they had been sanctified by rites that vividly illustrate the merging of traditions in Haitian religion: by means of offerings to the African gods, and through baptism by the rites of the Church.[a]

The *action de grâce* is another integral part of *vodun* ceremonialism that is essentially Catholic, since its lengthy service is composed entirely of prayers and hymns of the Church. As has been shown, the *action de grâce*, which precedes a *vodun service*, takes place before an "altar" which, important both then and at the later, more African rites, in itself documents in no small measure the combining of Catholicism and *vodun*. One, employed at a *service* not described in the earlier chapters, was covered with a red and white checked table-cloth, on top of which a smaller white cloth was spread.* Pinned to the canopy and to the front of the table-cloth were various chromolithographs of the saints; St. Michael attacking the Devil, Mater Dolorosa, St. James, the Virgin Mary and Jesus (the Assumption), and St. Expeditius. In front of the representation of St. James stood a crucifix with the figure of Jesus, in accordance with the custom of never omitting to have one of these at any *vodun* ceremonial. The table bore many offerings; at the back were four bottles of soft drinks, with cups; while also to be seen were several hard rolls, an ear of corn, a dish containing eggs, and another holding, among other things, rice. One of the containers on the table held holy water, while candles for use both in the *action de grâce* and in the later *vodun* rituals lay beside this. Thus crucifix, candles, pictures of the saints, and holy water were combined in this ceremony with offerings of food and drink to be given the gods that the ancestors had brought from Africa.[a] The songs sung at the voduistic portions of these *services* also reflect the psychological unity of Catholic and African elements in *vodun* worship. One of these declares:

* This altar is shown in the illustration facing p. 192.

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3 Mirebalais

Je crois en Dieu,	I believe in God,
Oui, Santa Maria.	Yes, St. Mary.
Santa Maria,	St. Mary,
Qui sorte nan Guinée.	Who came from Guinea.
Je crois en Dieu,	I believe in God,
Oui, Santa Maria.	Yes, St. Mary.

Another for the Virgin of Allada, sung in Leogane, is as follows:

Santa Maria la Madaleine,	St. Mary Magdalene
Prié pou' loa yo.	Pray for their *loa.*
O Allada-e,	O Allada-e,
Sonné une sonne pou' moin,	Ring a bell for me,
Pour m'allé.	So I may go.
M'dit, Allada-o,	I say, Allada-o,
Sonné une sonne	Ring a bell
Pou' les pitites noyé.	For the drowned children.

Of these elements, the portraits of the saints, or *images*, offer one of the most vivid instances of the mingling of African and European elements in Haitian belief, for they are the outward symbol of the psychological reconciliation that has been effected between the saints of the Church and the African deities. This is nothing peculiar to Haiti alone. In West Africa, wherever Catholicism has obtained something of a foothold, certain pagan deities are regularly identified with saints of the Church, and the same phenomenon is found in Cuba[6] and Brazil.[7] This identification of saints with the *loa*, whether initiated as a ruse against the detection of African worship or emanating from a reasoned analogy, would seem in Haiti, at least, to act as a device to achieve an adjustment between two conflicting systems by emphasizing the resemblance between Catholic saints and African nature deities. The importance of the *images* as symbolizing the reconcilia-

1: Herskovits E-4,5 (1934) 1937 SV3 HAIT SV3
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tion is consequently of the first order, while the presence of these chromolithographs in every Haitian hut and on the altars of *vodun* ceremonies indicates how deeply the acceptance of this identification has gone. In the house occupied in Mirebalais during this investigation, the following *images* were found on the wall:

Moses	St. Augustine	Our Lady of Mount Carmel
St. Peter the Apostle	St. Michael	St. Clara
Baptism of Christ	Peter and Paul	

It is perhaps worth mentioning that the owner of the house, when renting it, stipulated that these *images* were to remain in place, for their power kept the house, its contents and occupants from harm.

No greater concurrence of opinion is had in the designations of saints given to corresponding *loa* than in any other facet of Haitian belief. Those here listed were obtained in two ways: either the equivalents of *loa* were named in the course of discussions with priests and other members of the *vodun* cult, or the *images* themselves were shown to members of the cult, and the names of the corresponding *loa* were recorded. Mater Dolorosa is held by most persons to be Gran' Ezilie, but in one instance this figure was equated with Ezilie Freda Dahomey with the insistent qualification that the two were not the same *loa*. The saint is represented as richly clothed, wearing many rings and necklaces and surrounded by other evidences of great wealth, so that the correspondence arises from the fact that Ezilie is held to be the richest of the *loa*. Notre Dame d'Alta Gracia is related to the *loa* Kpanyol, or the Spanish *loa*, while Notre Dame de Grace is the water-goddess

1: Herskovits E-6,5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
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overturn his memory, overturn his thought, overturn his house, overturn for me my enemies visible and invisible; cause the thunder and the tempest to break them into pieces. And in honor of St. Bouleversé, three Paters and three Ave Marias. . . .'

Thus it is seen how Catholicism invades the beliefs and rites of the *vodun* cult. In an analogous fashion *vodun* has not failed to make itself felt in certain festivals of the Church,[9] for while elements of *vodun*, rigidly suppressed inside the Catholic churches, are absent except in so far as they can be carried on surreptitiously, they are nevertheless integral parts of these fêtes in the minds of the folk who make pilgrimages to them. So arresting is the resulting mingling of practices, and so significant for the amalgamation of cultures that has taken place in Haiti, that a detailed discussion will be given of the most prominent instance of this type, the festival in honor of the Virgin of the Palms, which takes place each year on July fifteenth at Ville-Bonheur, or, as it is better known, at Saut d'Eau. The festival of 1926 has been described by Price-Mars;[10] here certain observations made during the fête of 1934 may be given, especially as they have to do with those aspects of the mythology which validate the festival, and as they illustrate the non-Catholic, voduistic phases of the celebration, of importance for the points being considered in this chapter.

Beside the church, Ville-Bonheur has three especially sacred spots, St. John, En bas Palmes, and Saut d'Eau — the falls themselves. At St. John is a large *campêche* tree surrounded by many palms, from beneath which flow streams of water. St. John is said to have appeared here, carrying his scepter as in the chromolithographs, and at that time water began to flow in the sacred springs, and except for one short period has continued ever since as holy water, being used for drinking and bathing, but never for purposes of cooking. The priests

1: Herskovits E-4,5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
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ABOVE, *Consecrating the drums: the "godfathers" and "godmothers" standing by with lighted candles as prayers of the Church are recited.*

BELOW, *The vodun priest employing African rites to complete the consecration of the drums.*

[facing P. 282]

1; Herskovits E-4, 8 (1936) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3 Mirebalais

stationed near by did not at first believe in this miracle, until after several appearances of the saint the higher authorities of the Church gave the fête their sanction. Many tales are recounted of skeptics who, though coming to scoff, became filled with awe when they put foot in the holy place and — significantly for the merging of the two religions — were possessed by *loa* for the first time. A church which has since burned and a small chapel were erected at the site which now is the entrance to the enclosure before the present church. This is the old calvary enlarged, and here the statue of the Virgin, saved when the earlier church burned, is found. Next to this church are the uncompleted walls of the structure which is to be a new and larger church. It is said, however, that this edifice has given much trouble, for each time the walls reach a certain height they fall. The people say: "The Virgin does not like this place," and believe that a simpler church should be built where the old one stood.

The vision of the Virgin at En bas Palmes is believed to have occurred several times, most recently as placed by a lively tradition in the days of the American Marine occupation, when a priest is said to have caused both St. John and En bas Palmes to be closed for several years because, as at present, many who prayed at the church also took occasion to worship their *loa*.

During the fête, however, the tale goes, the Virgin appeared on a palm tree. The people, on their knees worshipping, sent to the priest to come and pray. He declared it merely superstition, however, and called an American Marine captain stationed at Mirebalais to help him suppress this worship. The captain ordered a Haitian sergeant to shoot the vision, but the Virgin merely moved to another tree; another shot, and she moved again. They cut down the tree, and those who looked on with terror saw the vision slowly ascend to the sky. As the priest

1: Herskovits E-4, 6 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
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turned to leave, word came that his house had burned and nothing in it was saved. Later he suffered a paralytic stroke from which he never recovered. Some say that the American captain became ill and was sent to the States "as a punishment for what he had done." Several days later the sergeant was found mad, wandering in the woods. Since he had fired under orders, however, his punishment was but temporary, and on being cured he returned to Ville-Bonheur to ask pardon of the Virgin. Today he lives in Mirebalais. When they saw the American ill, the priest paralyzed, the sergeant mad, and the presbytery burned, "public clamor" became so strong that both St. John and En bas Palmes were reopened.[11]

In 1932 a cyclone at St. John tore down trees and houses and hurt but did not kill the worshippers who had gathered there. An eyewitness insisted he had seen the enormous whirling cloud rise from the sacred place. He had no time to reach his house, for with a noise like a cannon-shot the whirlwind came, and an enormous oak tree fell just behind him—"I saw death staring at me." Today he carries two scapularies to the Virgin to protect him.

The third sacred spot is at the falls themselves, where the grandeur and beauty of the scene is such as to induce the religious thrill almost unaided, and where great numbers go in the course of their pilgrimage to Ville-Bonheur. There are two falls, situated at a distance of several miles from the village, one for Damballa and one for Aida Wedo, and it is believed that those who bathe in the sacred streams become possessed. It is said that the palms near by are sacred to the Virgin, but others hold that they are for Damballa. Many visit the falls on the day preceding the fête, but the largest throng hurries there immediately after the principal mass, when the greatest number of possessions and the most violent seizures by the *loa* occur. The falls, therefore, in association

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1936) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
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with the purely Catholic rituals carried on at the village church, are seen to hold an important if unofficial place in the complex of rites known in the Haitian Church calendar as the Fête of Saut d'Eau.

During the two or three days preceding the fête and on the fifteenth of July itself, an air of great gayety not unlike the carnival spirit accompanying European Church festivals pervades the surrounding country. Camions traverse the almost impassable side road, bringing crowds of people from Port-au-Prince, from the Dominican border, and even from the north, who throng the streets and the shrines and tramp the miles from the village to the waterfalls or visit the nearer sacred sites of St. John's Wood and En bas Palmes, to light candles and ask the satisfaction of their needs. Like the falls themselves, these spots by their very beauty awaken a sense of emotional awareness, and it is not strange that here, as at the falls, many possessions occur. At night, in particular, the great trees with their interlacing serpent-like roots, the gaping earth which at En bas Palmes is witness to the uprooting of the palm trees where the miracle occurred, and the stream of sacred water, all make a scene of indescribable eeriness, heightened by the flickering candles given as offerings, and the open lamps of those who stay the night here to fulfill their vows.

In the town itself gambling and other games go on, and dances of all kinds are held at night, among them *vodun* and *bal*, though at these public dances no possessions are countenanced. One of the most colorful aspects of the scene is the *penitants*, wearing clothing of varied colors in fulfillment of a request by the *loa* they worship or an obligation to them. Such folk are not permitted in church unless the clothing which marks them is covered by ordinary dress, but they walk the streets, often possessed and often using their power to heal those whom they encounter. Possessions by Ogun, by Gede, by Baron Samedi, by Damballa, by Ezilie and other *vodun* deities were observed, particularly at the shrines, where their

2: Courlander B-8 (1937-1958) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

in many details. But, in general, the cult establishment consists of a central building of one or more rooms with an adjoining court, or peristyle, over which there is a covering—usually a straw roof. The covering, called the *tonnelle*, is supported by a number of poles, one of which is placed squarely in the center of the court. This center pole—the *po'teau mitan* or *po'teau planté*—is the focus of most of the ritual activities. The loa who descend upon the service enter by way of this pole. The ritual *vèvès*, or flour paintings, are made at its foot. Around it all the dancing takes place. On certain rare occasions when rituals are held in the open, a carefully selected tree becomes the center post—though it is by no means certain that the po'teau mitan is not, in fact, a symbolic tree.

The building adjoining the peristyle contains the inner sanctum. Here are deposited the paraphernalia of the cult, such as ritual bottles and jars, flags of the société, and the iron kettles used in various ceremonies. On the walls there may be primitive paintings of the special loa of the hounfor, or perhaps of his symbol. The loa of the sea, Agwé, may be represented by a ship. Damballa, the serpent-rainbow loa, may be represented by a snake or a rainbow. Usually there are colored lithographs of Catholic saints, who have both Catholic and African names. And there are hand-beaten iron crosses, dishes containing Indian celts in which loa are believed to reside, gourd bowls, and carved wooden double and triple bowls used for services to dead twins and triplets. Upon the altar place, called *badji*, there are the *criches* or *govis*, earthen jars or bottles in which rest the loa removed from the heads of people who have died. Sometimes special niches are built on the hounfor grounds for the deities. Each cult priest designs his hounfor in his own way.

A hounfor belonging to a mambo near the town of Croix des Missions gave the appearance of having a large and prosperous société. Under the tonnelle eight beautifully carved Arada drums were suspended from a single peg. At a respectable distance hung a Martinique drum used only for dances on the occasion of a Nine Night. Inside the hounfor was an impressive display of sacred objects and decorations. One corner of the room was reserved for Symbi Yendézo, a patron loa of drinking water and rainfall. He was portrayed on the wall as a long, thin snake crawling in a maze of crosses. On the ground beneath the picture was a small concrete pool, in which two water snakes swam. Another corner was reserved for Agwé, and on his wall was a picture of a steamship. Along the back of the altar was an impressive array of govis, containing the spirits removed from the heads of deceased persons. There was a large plate of loa stones, and various protective charms stood near by. Flags and sabres

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1965) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

were stacked against the wall, and set about in various places were several assons, iron crosses, Catholic lithographs, chains and iron bars for the loa Ogoun, candles set in bottles, and an old forged double bell of African design.

Some of the hounfors found elsewhere are more elaborate and reflect the richer resources of the immediate community, or the creative impulses of the houngan and his helpers, or the pressure of competition. Some cult temples are prolific with painted designs and symbolic representations of the deities. Others are unpretentious, simple, and even Spartan.

In his book *En Haiti*, written approximately fifty years ago, Eugene Aubin describes a hounfor in the Cul-de-Sac Plain, a few miles from Port-au-Prince, as he saw it in 1906:

> [The] *hounfor* is fronted by a *peristyle*, which is used for the Vodoun dances and services; it is a large area, with a floor of beaten earth, covered with a straw roof. On three sides the walls rise to support the roof; on the fourth there is the inscription:
>
> *Société la Fleur de Guinée*
> *Roi d'Engole*
> [*Flower of Africa Society*
> *King of Angola*]
>
> indicating the name of the patron of the society [the loa Roi Angole, or Wangol], over which the *houngan* presides. The *hounfor* is an ordinary house, a little larger than average. The sanctuary contains a principal *pé* [altar], running the whole length of the room on one side, and another altar, a little smaller, in one of the corners. These *pés* are altars largely made of brick, in which the under part is decorated with hearts and stars in relief; above, draperies hang from the ceiling. The lateral *pé* is divided into three compartments. There are, therefore, four sections in all, consecrated to each of the *loa* served in the *hounfor:* Aguay Aoyo [Agwé Woyo], Damballa, Ogoun Badagry, and Loco [Loko], Nago King. Maître Aguay is represented by the customary little boat; a medallion is consecrated to Monsieur Damballa, shown holding two snakes in his hand; a figure on horseback represents Ogoun Badagry, with a woman at one side holding a flag; Papa Loco is pictured in full uniform, smoking a pipe and fanning himself. The walls are covered with religious paintings [Catholic lithographs]. The back of the altar is occupied by numerous carafes in baked clay, called *canaris*, which contain the . . . *mystères* [spirits taken from the heads of the dead] gathered in the *hounfor;* in front are bottles of wine, liqueurs and vermouth presented to them in homage; then the plates, the cups for the *mangers-marassas* [feasts for the twin spirit], crucifixes, hand bells, *assons* for directing the dance or calling the *loa;* plates filled with polished stones [celts] inherited from the Indians—"thunder stones," symbols of Damballa, which Saugo [Sobo] the god of lightning hurls from the sky into the enclosure of his favorite *peyolai* [*houngan*]. Beside these miraculous stones are many coins of copper or silver [property of the *loa*]. The *loa* . . . possess coins of Joseph Bonaparte, King of Spain, minted in 1811; of Frederick VII of Denmark, 1859; of Charles IV of Spain, 1783, and of President Boyer, dated year 27 and year 30 of Haitian Independence. On the ground there is placed a coconut-oil lamp; in the corner, the flags of the *hounfor* and the saber of [the] *hoplare*, the man who acts as master of ceremonies in the services.

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

in the services. In the court, the bases of four sacred trees . . . are surrounded by circles of masonry [low brick walls]. These *reposoirs* are inhabited by the *loa* Legba, Ogoun, Loco and Saugo.[5]

There is little in Aubin's description to suggest that hounfors were much different a half century ago from what they are today. He errs in identifying the "thunder stones" solely with Damballa. But his eye for detail was acute. In 1950 a mambo in the neighborhood of this hounfor described by Aubin affirmed that some of the loa stones and old coins which he mentioned are still to be found among the properties of a hounfor in the Cul-de-Sac Plain. Others were lost in one of the cleric-inspired raids which despoiled cult temples of drums and other paraphernalia about fifteen years ago.

Many services are held outside the hounfor and the peristyle. Some rituals, such as animal sacrifices and "talking to the loa below the water," may take place some distance from the cult buildings. Indeed, various Vodoun ceremonies may be held at waterfalls, at the seashore, in sacred groves, in ordinary homes, in a boat at sea,[6] or under a sacred tree.

The rites of the hounfor are almost without number. They are associated with the supplication or conciliation of virtually countless deities, each of which has his own special service. There are services in multitudinous combinations and permutations for the dead, for twins, for albinos, and for unborn children. There are ceremonies for the elevation of hounsi and for initiation, smoke and fire ordeals, and tests of other kinds. There are *mangé loa* (feasts for the deities) and *mangé morts* (feasts for the dead). There are services for the sick, for the crops, and for the harvest. In one context or another, Vodoun relates to nearly every aspect and phase of life—and its counterpart, death. Since every region, every locality, and, in fact, almost every hounfor has developed its own ritual out of the common materials, it is possible to see hundreds of ceremonies without ever seeing precisely the same one twice. Yet the common elements bind them all together.

One such prime element is the possession, the "mounting" of the human body by one of the deities. Possession is a psychological phenomenon common to the rites of many cults throughout the world. It is known in Asia, Africa, Europe, and America. It is not the unique property of the African and his Haitian descendant. In the United States it is a commonplace not only among certain Negro cults but certain white cults as well. The United States Negro had ample West African inspiration for his seizures in the church and at the baptism. The intellectual meaning of these seizures has changed, as have their outward forms to a measurable extent, but their emotional content has not altered.

[5] Translated from the French of Aubin, En Haiti, pp. 59-59. Cf. P. 349, Category 116.--Analyst

[6] [Footnote appears on P. 349, Category 116.--Analyst]

they say, and "rides" them. What the possessed persons do then depends upon the personality and whim of the loa. Generally they take on the special personal characteristics of the loa. Their voices and manners change and their postures and attitudes undergo transfiguration. They may talk about the "island below the water," about community ancestors, about intimate affairs of the community, or about how things are going back in Africa. Sometimes they utter words or phrases recognized as "African language." And on occasion possessed persons talking *langage* are said to be speaking Greek, Arabic, Hebrew, or Spanish. At the moment of first impact, when the loa enter their heads, they stagger, jerk, and tremble, often falling on the ground. Then, soon afterward, their behavior begins to move in a groove of conventionalized activity.

Most commonly the loa arrive during religious rituals or dances. They come by way of the *po'teau mitan*, the center pole which supports the roof of the peristyle. It is around this pole that the sacred vèvès, or flour drawings, are made. At the foot of the pole sacrifices are offered and libations are poured.

Yet possession may occur anywhere and at any time. The sound of a certain drumbeat may be the signal for it, or a sudden fright, or an emotional crisis, or any situation to which possession has been conditioned. The houngan or the mambo may facilitate possession, control it, and terminate it. The cult priest is acutely sensitive to the conditions favorable to possession. He knows how to heighten emotional tension and how to soften it. A competent houngan "plays" his service as though it were a delicate instrument. He takes everything in, issues instructions to his servitors from time to time, orders the drum tempo increased or diminished, knows how to change pace. Sometimes he hovers in the background unobtrusively, encouraging the singing and dancing like a benevolent father. At other times he comes to the center of the activities and takes command. He becomes the focus of all eyes. His slightest action is watched with intensity. He may take the hand of one of the servitors, pirouette him about, and compel the loa to enter. When the servitor is "mounted," the houngan may conduct him through ritual activity. At the right moment the houngan may help the loa to leave.

The spectators who observe possession in others are usually aware of the identity of the loa who has entered. When the ancient loa Damballa Wèdo comes in, his "horse" falls to the ground, wriggles like a snake, and makes what are considered to be snakelike sounds in his throat. For Damballa is the venerable deity identified with the rainbow, which in ancient Dahomean lore was thought to be the great serpent come out from the underworld to drink after a rain. When the loa Ogoun Chango enters,

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his "horse" may trample in glowing coals, plunge his hands in boiling oil, or play with red-hot iron bars. For Ogoun Chango is a fire-eater—a deity of the forge and of battle. The deity Legba is characterized as a limping old man. A "horse" possessed by Legba may cavort about on a kind of cane-crutch called a Legba stick. Each loa has his distinctive mark. As the Haitians say, "you learn about the loa by watching his horses."

In addition to having homes in Africa or below the water, most loa have special residing places in Haiti, such as stones, caves, trees, waterfalls, or springs. One may come across a boulder or a bamboo grove sacred to a certain loa, and food offerings are likely to be seen there. Many loa are identified with some specific variety of tree and will "inhabit" all such trees throughout the country. Loa Calbassie, for example, lives in the calabash tree, and Loa Général Brisé in the chardette tree. Offerings to these deities are set out underneath the tree or hung in its branches, and services may be held around the trunk.

Loa also live in the old Carib and Arawak celts which are found from time to time. These "loa stones," as they are called, are identified by their forms and their ability to pass certain tests. Some Haitians declare the stones must be able to "whistle," to perspire when blown upon, and to "talk." The loa stones ordinarily are passed on from one generation to another, in the hounfor and in the peasant hut alike. In this way the loa who inhabit them are inherited. Sometimes, but rarely, stones are sold; disposing of a loa stone requires an elaborate ceremony to guarantee that the seller will not be injured by the loa, who is likely to feel "wounded." In such a ceremony the loa is fed and placated and asked to go his way in peace. The loa stones are sometimes called "thunder stones," in the belief that they were hurled to earth by the deities Kebiosu, Sobo, and Chango (all of whom had similar functions among the Arada and Yoruba peoples of West Africa). The stones are cared for by their owners with the greatest reverence.

Loa are acquired by individuals in various ways. Many Haitians hold that every infant is born with a *mait' tête*—a spirit who is "master of the head." In this light, no individual is without a loa, although the deity may never manifest interest in the individual by an act of possession. A man may acquire a loa in the course of his life, although in that event the original mait' tête must be retired from his head. The "inherited" loa are usually not the personal deities but the special protectors of the household or the hounfor and are known as "loa of the house" or "family loa."

Should a man acquire a new loa to replace the old as his mait' tête, he must undergo a ceremony known as *lavé tête*—the "washing of the head." The old loa is retired and sent away, leaving the field clear for the new

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in a circle around the two boiling pots. On the seventh circuit of the course, the laplace stopped him at the first pot. The houngan grasped the man's free hand and, bending down, dipped it into the boiling oil. There was no visible indication of pain. They moved to the second pot, and the man's hand was dipped again. They proceeded again to the first pot, where the dipping was repeated, then back again to the second pot. The neophyte's hand entered the boiling oil seven times in all. He made no sound, showed no resistance, no reflexes. Then the hounsi took him back to the hounfor. It was all over. After three days of isolation, they said, he would be kanzo.

The houngan peeled an orange, while everyone crowded close to watch. In it he found a two-gourde note. He peeled another orange and found in it a slip of paper with the name of a woman on it. She came forward, and everyone laughed. She was an old woman, the oldest of the hounsi. The houngan held the two-gourde note between his teeth. The old woman took the other end of the note in her teeth, but she had to kiss the houngan before he would let go.

The ritual of brulé zin, or kanzo, is of unmistakable West African origin. Herskovits has described a ceremony in Dahomey which in many details could easily have taken place in Haiti. The Dahomean rite was in honor of the gods of the Thunder pantheon. Here, too, we find a pot of boiling palm oil, in which are the sacred dumplings: "When the fire had finally subsided and only a faint column of smoke issued from the pot, the initiate came dancing toward it, thrust her hand into the boiling oil, and lifted out a dumpling. . . ."[2]

Family Rites at Léogane

These services for family ancestors took place in the mountains above Léogane at the ancestral home of my friend Libera Borderau. They were conducted on the grounds of his grandmother's house. The ritual began with dancing. Against the wall of the house sat the three drummers with their Arada drums. Near them, leaning against the wall, were the flags of the family loa. Also near by was a long high table serving as a makeshift altar called the *pé*. In the very center of the table in a clean white dish lay eight loa stones—old Carib artifacts. The stones were identical in shape, all of them perfectly symmetrical, resembling small, pointed cigars. In the *pierre-loas* lived the family deities, and much of the ceremony was built around them. The stones had been bathed and polished in oil for the occasion. Set around the plate of stones were numerous small *criches* (French, *cruches*—clay water jugs), glass bottles, and earthenware jars which also contained loa. On the low bench before the table, seven dishes

[2] [Herskovits, Dahomey, II, 165. Cf. P 351, Cat. 116.—Archivist]

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

were set out in a row, and before them four *coui*, the half-gourd bowls used in services to the marassas, the twin spirits.

In the house, at the center of the floor, was a round flat stone about ten inches in diameter and about two inches thick, resembling a millstone. This was the *pierre-manman*, the mother stone responsible for the coming of the other loa stones and who cared for them in the absence of the family. In this stone, they said, was the spirit of the old loa Nananbouclou. On a mat in the corner of the room two children slept.

Outside, on a chair, his back against the wall of the house, the houngan sat, his rattle and bell in hand. He had come several miles to conduct the service. Most of those who danced were his own hounsi. The houngan was "strong" and well known in the region; people said he had worked for high government officials, including the president himself.

After several rounds of Arada dancing in which children as well as adults took part, the drums stopped. The houngan and his laplace moved up to the building which served for the night as the hounfor. It was up a steep slope, about a hundred feet from the dance court. There they prepared for the sacrifice to Chébo Profiel, the honored loa of the evening. Passing in and out among the spectators was a woman who would be possessed by Papa Chébo; since he was the guest of the service, she (or the loa in her head) was free to come and go as she chose, to speak as she pleased, and to do what she wished. Mostly she shook hands with people, a ceremony which continued throughout the night. First she would offer the right hand, then the left; or perhaps both at once, in which case the hands would be shaken downward vigorously three or four times. Someone ignorantly said, "Bon soir, Madame!" and she turned on him to reprimand his insolence. She was not "Madame," she was *l'Autorité*, the Authority.

During the course of the evening the conviction became stronger and stronger in her that she was Chébo Profiel. From the time we first saw her until the end of the evening her personality underwent marked changes. She "became" Papa Chébo.

The houngan sat before a small hole, possibly a foot deep and ten inches in diameter, in front of the hounfor. The fresh earth was piled neatly to the side, and an enameled plate was set on top of it. Around the hole were the various dishes to be offered to Chébo Profiel. The laplace prayed in Latin, a short Catholic service. Then the houngan, shaking his beaded rattle and tinkling his bell, called for Chébo to "enter." He made a small maize-flour drawing around the hole, and then began the feeding of the loa. The plates arranged for the feast contained roasted maize, roasted peanuts, bread, cassava, rice, and other foods. There were bottles of rum,

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

celebrated with elaborate rituals for the dead. As in Haiti, great importance is laid on the presence of all living descendants, whose numbers are calculated to influence the ancestors' behavior. And as in Haiti, the first yams and the first rice are offered to the dead, and only after the family ritual does the family divide the crop.[5]

Service for the Assotor Drum

The *assotor* drum is the largest and most sacred of all Haitian drums. Around it is built an impressive and elaborate service known as the *mangé assotor*, which, according to local traditions and circumstances, may be held as often as every three years or as infrequently as every twenty-one years. The period between mangés always consists of an odd number of years. A houngan from Jérémie declared the service might properly be held every three, five, or seven years. Another cult priest in the Cul-de-Sac Plain said it could be held every seven, seventeen, or twenty-one years. The assotor is known as the *plus grand moune* (the most venerable "man") of the hounfor. However, few cult centers possess an assotor. "Assotor c'est fort bagaille, c'est pas zaffai tout moune" (The assotor is powerful, it isn't everybody's affair), Haitians say. This is what a man from Jérémie tells about it:

"The assotor is the greatest of all things in the hounfor. The Rada drums are only for the Dahomey nation. The Congo drums are for the Congo nation. The assotor is a man of Dahomey, but he is for all nations. It is for all loa—Pétro, Congo, Bumba, Dahomey. The assotor belongs to Dahomey, but when there is a great service the assotor is the host to the loa of every rite, the loa of Haiti and of Africa. When the assotor is played, the loa are awakened everywhere. Loa who have been forgotten by the Creoles (Haitians) will come to the service and mount people, and when the loa have gone, many people don't know what loa has been riding them. Some ancient spirits from far away come only to the assotor service, and when it is over they aren't heard of again.

"The assotor drum is not for small things, it is for great occasions. For some people there are no occasions in their whole lives great enough for an assotor service. When all other things have failed, it is only then that the assotor is called upon.

"If a big houngan should have an assotor drum, he can have only one, and it is the chief of the hounfor. All other drums are its servants. You can make an assotor, but it is not necessarily an assotor. It may look like an assotor and not be an assotor. To be an assotor it must not only have the shape of an assotor but it must be accepted by the loa. There was a houngan near Jérémie who made an assotor and held a great service with it,

[5] [Informant: Albert Kofi Prempeh, Ghana. Cf. p. 351, category 116. -- Analyst]

2; Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

534 796 798 787 but it wasn't a genuine assotor and the loa didn't come. The drummer beat the assotor, but none of the loa came. As he played, the stick kept falling out of his hand. This was a bad signal (omen). None of the people got loa in their heads. The houngan was in a great sweat, but nothing happened. Another houngan came after the third day and told him to bring the service to an end. He did that. They threw the false assotor away and no one would touch it.

534 796 798 782 787 (796) "To make an assotor, there is first a service. The houngan goes into the woods to find a great tree that is suitable. The trunk must be big enough so that the drum is at least as tall as a man. Most assotors are six feet high or more. The houngan must buy the tree from Maît' Grand Bois, the loa who is Master of the Forest. There is a service under the tree, a goat or a bull is killed, and the houngan places money on the ground for Maît' Grand Bois. Then Maît' Grand Bois mounts his horses. He enters the head of the houngénicon or the laplace. Sometimes he rides the houngan himself. He is very rough with his horses. But if he accepts the money, the houngan has the tree cut down, and he has an assotor drum made. When the drum is finished, a special stick must be made to beat it. Again they go to the woods. They carry the great assotor drum with them. There is singing but no dancing or drumming. They find a tree from which they will cut the drumstick, and there is a service. The houngan must buy the branch from which the drumstick will be made. He offers money to Maît' Grand Bois, the same as before. He spills a little water on the ground for Maît' Grand Bois. He holds a candle in his hand. They sing to Maît' Grand Bois to let them have the stick. Maît' Grand Bois is the master of all the trees, but he is thinking also of the other loa and how they feel about it. On the Island Below the Water he consults with them. If he agrees to give the stick, he makes it known by mounting some of the hounsi, or the houngan, or maybe the man who will be the special assotor drummer. Then they cut down the branch and make the drumstick.

534 798 796 "The assotor drum is not dedicated to Ogoun or Êzilie or any other single loa. If it is baptized, it is given its own name, Assotor. The spirit of the assotor is multiple, for it is the *ruppel* for all loa everywhere. The spirit of the assotor is called Assotor, and it is a kind of loa, but it is not one loa but all loa.

534 796 798 796 "In the assotor service, all loa come. Ogoun, Damballa, Legba, Tijean Pétro, Dan Pétro, Gèdé, Maît' Cimitière, they all come. The big loa come and the little loa, the chiefs and their escortes. Every big loa has an escorte of twenty-one smaller loa. Some of the smaller loa have their own escortes. Damballa comes crawling like a snake. Makanda comes crawling like a snake. Ogoun comes fighting, chewing on nails or anything iron. Badé

comes quietly. Pié Cassé comes crawling because of his broken feet. Each loa comes in his own way.

"First there is dancing for the Congo and Pétro loa. There is dancing for the Kanga and Ibo nation. Last of all is Dahomé, for the assotor belongs to the Dahomé nation, and Dahomé is the host.

"The assotor service is the biggest of all services. It last fifteen days. Old people say that once there were services lasting more than twenty days. Every day, animals are killed—bulls, goats, pigs, chickens, turkeys—all according to the loa who are there to be fed. When Moundongue is fed, a dog's ears are clipped in his honor, because Moundongue is fond of dogs. More happens in the assotor mangé than all the rest of the year. Dahomé is host to the other nations, so the Rada service comes last. But the assotor drum is the host even to Dahomé, and it is fed last of all.

"The assotor drum is dressed in the finest of clothing and kerchiefs during the mangé. It is the king of everything.

"When the mangé assotor is ended, when the drum has been fed, there is an immediate Mass held in church for the souls in purgatory. You don't need to have any special reason, but you must hold the Mass for all the dead. You serve coffee, sandwiches, cake, and other refreshments for all the people.

"When there is no mangé going on, the assotor is kept in a special place in the hounfor. Every seven or nine months the houngan has a special *rappel* beaten for it on the Rada drums, and rum is spilled on the ground for it. It is a great responsibility to own an assotor. But it does great things for the houngan who owns it."

Service for Mait' Grand Bois at Anse-à-Veau

Orthodox tradition in the region of Anse-à-Veau places the loa Mait' Grand Bois as the most potent and venerable of deities. He is the supreme mystère, whose good will or eccentric whim determines the fortunes of all men. Somewhat subsidiary to Grand Bois, but served within the same rites, are two other non-Dahomé loa—Moundongue (of Congo origin) and Ibo. Older people of Anse-à-Veau regard this trilogy, along with Femme Grand Bois (the wife of Mait' Grand Bois), as the core of "Guinée" ritual. There is also a second group of deities, consisting primarily of Ogoun Feraille, Êzilie, and Fréda Dahomé; these loa are of the Dahomey family and are regarded as somewhat less important. Should services for any of them be held, they follow rites for the Grand Bois constellation. People in this region hold that there is only one Ibo loa, one Moundongue, one Ogoun, and one Êzilie, each of them with many names or manifestations. Legba, the Dahomean spirit of procreation,

[For footnote, see Category 116, P. 351. --Analyst]

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If it should happen that on the appointed day four years later the family is unable to hold the regular feast for Grand Bois, the grand famille goes to the tree sacred to the loa, with a bottle of *siro'* and other token gifts. He explains the difficulties of the family; he tells the loa that it has been a bad year, that the crops have been poor, and that the family has not been able to accumulate enough money to buy sacrificial animals. He asks Grand Bois for a six-month postponement. The loa agrees to the postponement, making his intentions clear through various signs when the grand famille is possessed. "Grand Bois is a good loa," people say, "but if you fail to meet your obligations to him he will be very stern. If you don't keep your promise to him, he may seize you [i.e., kill you]."

When the rites for Mait' Grand Bois are finished, services for Ogoun and the Dahomé deities may be held, beginning on Friday and running through the week end. The Ogoun service is a festive affair. There is much singing and dancing, and early on Saturday morning the sacrificial bull is dressed and decorated with red and blue kerchiefs. Red and blue ribbons are tied to his horns, and he is led on a grand tour to various places, including Ogoun's tree. The drummers walk behind him, and after them members of the family, some dancing, some singing, and some mounted by the loa Ogoun. The procession passes three times around the cemetery, then heads back toward the family *habitation*. When the participants reach the tree sacred to Legba, they sing to this loa, invoking him to "ouvri bayè pou' moin" (open the gate for me). Finally, when the procession reaches the *habitation*, the sacrificial bull is killed. After Ogoun has been served his mangé, the rites are terminated with an *action de grâce*.

Near Anse-à-Veau there is a dried-up spring. It is said that many years ago during a big service for Mait' Grand Bois a man mounted by this loa rushed to the foot of a large tree and began clawing at the ground. He dug a hole there with his hands, and when it was only a few feet deep, water began to flow. The members of the société later enlarged the hole and lined it with stone. It was discovered that a giant crab was living in this water. One year, a service to Mait' Grand Bois was missed. The crab disappeared from the spring, and soon the water stopped flowing. "Grand Bois gives," the people say, "but if he is not remembered he also takes back."

Possession by the Loa Pinga Maza

On the outskirts of Port-au-Prince there is a hounfor dedicated to the loa Pinga Maza, also known by the name Bakulu Baka. He is a ferocious and fearsome spirit of the Pétro family who is known for his propensity

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to "eat" people; that is, to destroy them. To do this he employs such means as disease, insanity, and destruction of crops. If a man serves Pinga Maza well, the loa protects him in return; but for those who anger him, Pinga is a menacing and vengeful creature. People often say, "Pinga, c'est djab" (Pinga is a devil).

The Pinga hounfor in Port-au-Prince is called the *Société de la Belle Jeune Fleur*. Its peristyle is simple and is hardly distinguishable from those of other small hounfors. Around the base of the center pole is a three-foot-high wall of masonry, decorated with simple cult symbols. The outer room of the hounfor proper also resembles many another. The familiar pot têtes containing loa stand on a wooden altar, and there are Catholic lithographs on the walls. But the inner room belongs exclusively to Pinga Maza. Here are all the accoutrements and objects sacred to the deity. Everything is red. Pinga's clothing and kerchiefs are red. On the walls are painted esoteric designs—hands, skulls, and crosses—all in red. The bottles, magic bundles, and govis on the altar are decorated with red cloth, ribbons, or paint. In the middle of the earthen floor is embedded a heavy wooden cross. On each end of the crossbeam hangs a large calabash resembling a bulbous hand. And on top of the upright is affixed a human skull. The total impression of this hounfor is that of a bizarre aberration, calculated to intimidate and terrify. The houngan himself is relatively young, literate, and city wise. His personality is smooth and sharp, and he lacks the air of sincerity and easy simplicity which most often characterizes the houngan of the mountains.

In this inner room, before the skull and the cross, there took place a small service for a client, to determine what kind of magic was needed to fend off malevolent actions of an enemy. On the day of the divining session, there hung from the rafters of the tonnelle a long rope, which extended into a deep hole in the earth near the door. Hanging on the rope, down inside the hole, were two gray dolls tightly bound together. Hanging still farther down were a knife, a fork, and other, unidentifiable objects. This cluster of magic paraphernalia was an *expédition* at work; it was an elaborate pouin, which was working against an enemy who lived far away.

Before entering the hounfor, the houngan took a long rope whip from the wall and cracked it seven times before the door. This process, known as *frete cache*, was to "wake up" the loa within. The houngan then entered, followed by the client who was seeking help. They paused briefly in the outer room, where the houngan took up his asson and bell and made a small vèvè on the ground. He spoke briefly in *langage* and then passed on through the door to the inner room. There the

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of Haiti. But the route to it is through water. When the Haitians say "under the water" they do not mean under the sea. The ocean is regarded as the special domain of Agwé, La Sirène, and a few related deities, but it has nothing to do with most loa. "Under the water" specifically means under the springs, the rivers, and the fresh-water lakes. Fresh water has the greatest of significance in relation to most of the Vodoun deities.

When a loa comes to visit his Haitian children he comes by way of the *chimin dleau* (the water road)—that is to say, by way of the river, the waterfall, or the spring. Because the spring is the primary source of fresh water, it is the most direct means of contact with the land of the loa. Tales are heard everywhere of persons who, drawing water from the spring at night, heard the voices of loa or the sound of singing and drumming coming up from somewhere below. And virtually all the tales about human beings who visited the land of the loa describe them as descending into a river or disappearing into a waterfall.

The loa are accustomed to traveling by the "water road." And in all aspects of the Vodoun service, this "water road" is refreshed and replenished. When the road is dry, contact with the loa is diminished. When it is moist, the loa travel easily.

Thus, the houngan constantly uses water to entice and invite the deities. He holds a glass or pitcher of water at the center pole of his peristyle. He extends it toward the four cardinal points. He spills water at the foot of the center pole. He spills water in the hounfor at the foot of the *pé*, or altar. He sets a pitcher of water at the gateway of his *habitation*. And often, during a service, he pours a pathway of water in the dust from his gateway into his peristyle. Within nearly every hounfor there is at least one *bassin*, or pool, dedicated to the loa who is the *maît' caille*, the master of the house. These pools are carefully filled with water drawn from the springs. They are places of rest and refreshment for the deities whose names or portraits are inscribed on the walls above.

Sometimes rites and services are held at the site of the spring, the houngan and his entourage marching down to it from the hounfor for the occasion. So, too, there are annual pilgrimages to waterfalls such as Saut d'Eau, where the loa mount their "horses" in profusion.

Within the hounfor, during a service, the cult priest and the servitors pour "libations" of water on the earth, so that the loa may be refreshed. And virtually without end, the hounfor is the scene of ritual ceremonies in which the loa is bathed and thus "renewed" in the heads of his servitors.*

*[For footnote, see category 116, P. 351.--Analyst]

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The importance of water in Vodoun has a fundamentally West African character. Among the Yoruba and the Ashanti and in Dahomey, for example, water rites are a significant aspect of religious ritual. Herskovits notes the frequency of religious pilgrimages to streams in West Africa.

> In one instance, at Abeokuta, a bedecked procession of worshipers left a shrine atop a high hill, followed a long path to the riverside over two miles away, and returned before the ceremonies could be carried out at the shrine of the god. On one occasion, in Dahomey, the bed of the sacred stream run dry was "filled" from nearby wells so that this water could be ritually redrawn for use in an especially important ceremony. Among the Ashanti, pilgrimages to Lake Bosumtwe and other sacred bodies of water regularly occur. And it is on such occasions that the spirit of the river or lake or sea manifests itself, by "entering the head" of the devotee and causing him to fling himself, possibly possessed, into the water.[8]

So it is also in Haiti, where possession at the river's edge may cause the devotee to leap into the river. At Saut d'Eau, possessed persons plunge into the waterfall without regard for their safety, being in the care of the loa who have mounted them.

Into this water complex the Christian rite of baptism has been easily absorbed, providing merely a new act of veneration for water and its properties. In the Haitian mind baptism is not far removed from the *lavé tête* ritual, the washing of the head, or the *rafraîchi tête*, the "refreshing" of the head, both of which are acts in propitiation of the loa.[9] So related is the baptismal concept in the Haitian mind, that the term "baptize" is used to describe the lavé tête; it is said that the loa is being "baptized." So also are drums "baptized," not to mention yams, and even the hounfor itself.

Marriage to a Loa

Although the term *hounsi* (spirit wife, or wife of the spirit) is applied to a large class of servitors of the Vodoun temple, only a small number of servitors ever pass through rites which give them a husband-wife or wife-husband relationship with a loa. Reasons for these mystic marriages vary, but usually the rituals take place upon the prescription of a cult priest who interprets the will of the deities concerned. Most of the mystic marriages of which I have heard have taken place in the general area of Port-au-Prince and the Cul-de-Sac Plain. In some other areas of Haiti it appears that no such rites have taken place locally within the memory of the elder inhabitants. One aged man living near Belladère declared: "It [marriage to a loa] is impossible. People serve loa, they do not marry them. A man does not marry his burro. A loa

8 [Herskovits, The Myth of the Negro Past, p. 233. Cf. p. 351, Category 116. -- Analyst]

9 [It is of interest to note the perseverance of traditional attitudes toward water rites in certain Negro cults in the United States. River baptism often is attended by ecstatic seizures in similar form. Cf. p. 351, Category 116. -- Analyst]

Atibon Legba ouvri bayè pou' moin ago!
Ou wè Atibon Legba ouvri bayè pou' moin ouvri bayè!
M'apè rentré quand ma tourné,
Ma salue lwa yo!

Atibon Legba, open the gate for me, ago!
You see, Atibon Legba, open the gate for me, open the gate!
I will enter when I return,
I salute the loa!

After this appeal, or sometimes while it is being sung, the houngan spills a little water on the earth at the base of the po'teau mitan. It is an inducement for the loa to "enter," for the loa reside "below the water" and their passage into the hounfor is made easier by water. The houngan may spill his water in a long path from the entrance of the peristyle to the po'teau mitan, or extend his pitcher invitingly to the four points of the compass. Then, perhaps, another song is sung to Legba:

Papa Legba nan hounfor moin!
Papa Legba nan hounfor moin!
Papa Legba nan hounfor moin!
Ou salue qui pouté desperas,
C'est ou salue ka pouté wholi pou' lwa yo!
Papa Legba, Papa Legba!

Papa Legba is in my hounfor!
Papa Legba is in my hounfor!
Papa Legba is in my hounfor!
You who carry the flag,
It is you who shade the loa from the sun!
Papa Legba, Papa Legba!

As the ritual gets under way, there may be a general song of welcome to all the loa of the cult, such as this one:

Bonjou' oh bonjou' bonjou' bonjou' bonjou'!
Bonjou' oh bonjou' bonjou' bonjou' bonjou'!
Oh bonjou' oh bonjou' lwa moins! [Ex. 43]

Good day, oh, good day, good day, good day, good day!
Good day, oh, good day, good day, good day, good day!
Oh, good day, oh, good day my loa!

When the service is well in progress, the songs may describe the qualities of the deities—their character, behavior and needs. If it is Balindjo, for example, the song may advertise that persons with this loa in their heads are immune to poison:

Ogoun Balindjo,
Oh Ogoun eh!

Ogoun Balindjo,
Oh, Ogoun, eh!

Ogoun Balindjo,
Oh Ogoun ah!
C'est pas mangé mangé
Poté tayé chosé mauvé [Ex. 41]

Ogoun Balindjo,
Oh, Ogoun, ah!
There is no poisoned food
That will kill my horse!

Ogoun Pié, known also by the Christian name St. Jacques, is the deity of war, and this song describes his courage and valor:

St. Jacques Majeur a voyé dit'm ga'pas dégé!
St. Jacques ah voyé dit'm ga'pas dégé!
St. Jacques Majeur a voyé dit'm ga'pas la-guié!
St. Jacques ah voyé dit'm ga'pas la-guié! [Ex. 42]

Major St. Jacques sent to tell me he is already a man!
St. Jacques, oh, sent to tell me he is already a man!
Major St. Jacques sent to tell me he is a man of war!
St. Jacques, oh, sent to tell me he is a man of war!

Should the service be to the lou Dumballa Wido, symbolized as a rainbow and a great serpent, this song might be sung, commenting that he cannot be drowned in the water:

Papa Dumballa ou c'est couleuve ah!
Pouq'ou pas néyé?
Pouq'ou pas néyé?
Dumballa pouq'ou pas néyé nan dleuve? [Ex. 43]

Papa Dumballa you are a snake, ah!
Why don't you drown?
Why don't you drown?
Dumballa, why don't you drown in the water?

[523] [539] [796] [798] Dumballa, the rainbow, is in fact the source of the water that bubbles from the earth in springs. He is a patron of the spring, and there he often lives in the form of a water snake. In many a houmfor where Dumballa is specially revered there is a *basin*, or pool, dedicated to him. [532] On the wall behind the pool there is usually a painting of Dumballa and Ayida, depicted as great serpents, sometimes with a feathered headdress. The pool is kept filled with fresh water from the spring, and [531] here one or more small snakes—symbols of Dumballa and Ayida—reside:

Ala lou nouvél nan dleuve
C'est Dumballa!
Ala lou nouvél nan dleuve
C'est Dumballa!
Papa Dumballa c'est che à dleuve!
Papa Dumballa c'est che à dleuve!

There is a lou who lives in the water,
It is Dumballa!

2: Courlander 8-9 (1937-1966) 1966 SV3 Haiti SV3

[P 95]

7. In the Mapou Tree: Magic, Demons, and Compacts

It is said by many Haitians that the loa are inclined to shun the mapou tree, for it is the secret rendezvous of countless kinds of demons. On certain nights, they say, you may see a chink of light showing through the trunk of the great mapou, indicating that the demons are in macabre session.

Sometimes it is the baka who meet there to feast and discuss their blood-curdling plans. The baka are described as small and evil creatures, human in form, with red eyes, and legs or arms covered with skin but no flesh. They change into animals at will and may roam the countryside as cats, dogs, or cattle. The baka are notorious sorcerers, and they perform only malevolent acts. They are reputed to "eat people," literally as well as figuratively. Stories are heard of such-and-such a man or child who disappeared and was presumed to have been eaten at a feast in the mapou tree. One man who passed a mapou in the dark of night reported that he heard muffled singing coming from within its trunk, accompanied by the pounding of mortars in which a gruesome feast was being pulverized. But the baka "eat" people also in the sense that they destroy them. It is said sometimes that a person with a withered arm or leg has been "eaten" by a baka. Perhaps he was an innocent victim; possibly he struck a horse or dog which was really a baka; or perhaps he simply brushed against a baka in the market place. Sometimes the baka directs his evil in the most indiscriminate sort of way, "eating" whatever human being he meets. Animals which behave strangely are suspected of being baka in disguise, and they are given wide berth.

A cow once found within an old brick-covered spring was taken to be a baka because no cow could have passed through the small doorway of the spring. It was assumed that she had entered as a small baka and had then changed to her animal form. The spring were unused for days, until some children reported that the baka had vanished. The cow was

2: Courlander 8-6 (1937-1965) 1980 8V3 Haiti 8V3

The cow lives

never seen again, and after a prêt' savane had read prayers over the spring the people again drew water from it.

Baka more often change themselves into gray or red pigs, but one ingenious baka was said to have transformed himself into a bicycle, which was seen traveling alone at night on the road from Port-au-Prince to Léogane.

Some people wear charms against the baka's malevolence; but the most effective weapon is the cocomacaque stick. The cocomacaque, or monkey palm, is a palm tree that grows only a few feet high. It has magical powers to drive off not only baka but other evil beings as well. When the tree is growing in its natural state, it is said, you must never mention its name in its own presence. Should you say within its hearing, for example, "Look at the cocomacaque," it will wilt and fall over, losing all its vital powers. The trunk of this midget palm is a favorite material for fashioning a walking stick or a short baton. A man going on a long journey into strange country may carry a cocomacaque stick with him to brandish at the crossroads where baka lurk, or to drive off strange animals that may be baka in disguise.

In their relationships with human beings, the baka are not always random. Sometimes, for a terrible price, they will undertake to make a man rich or to "eat" his enemies for him.

In some parts of Haiti, baka seemingly have found their way into the ranks of the loa. In the Congo-Guinée pantheon there is a deity called Bakulu Baka, or Babaku Baka. He is a malevolent spirit who "eats" people in the best baka tradition, and he lives, significantly, in the mapou tree, which is shunned by all good loa.

The *engagements*, or compacts, in which baka sometimes figure are usually made with another sort of creature, the *djab*, or devil. A djab is a manlike being but is superhuman, ferocious, and terrible. Some djab are small, some large, some innocent in appearance, some grotesque. They are supernatural sorcerers who deal out riches in exchange for human beings. A frustrated or desperate man may go to a djab and ask for a favor, which will usually be granted for a heart-rending price. Persons who appear to gain wealth suddenly may be suspected of having entered into an *engagement* with a powerful djab.

One story is about a man of Port-au-Prince who, needing a large sum of money, went to a famous djab who lives in a cave known as Trou Fourban. This powerful djab agreed to provide all the money required, but only on condition that the man deliver to him each year one of his children. The man suddenly came into a large fortune. But when the anniversary of his compact arrived, he did not go to Trou Fourban

2: Courlander 3-5 (1937-1938) 1960 SV3 Hait SV3

having died a virgin. The *latiè* is the spirit of a child who died before baptism.[1] The *revenant* is a spirit of a dead person who feels he has been mistreated, and who returns to the world of the living to plague their families or their enemies.

The *lou-garo* (*loup-garou*) is a being of another kind, a vampire. She is human in form but sheds her skin and assumes animal forms at night when she roams the countryside seeking a victim. Salt is her nemesis. Should her human skin be found and salt sprinkled inside it, she would not be able to put it back on and would be destroyed.

A special form of the lou-garo is the *bizango*, a kind of enormous dog that runs in packs at night seeking people to eat. Also related to the lou-garo is the *démon*, a male creature of amorphous personality and character who can convert himself into an animal at will. There are sociétés of démons which, like those of the baka, meet in the dark of night in their assembly hall inside the mapou tree. Haitians who are conversant with such matters agree that there are many such trees, but that the most notorious of them are Mapou Miteppe in Miragoane, Mapou Simon in Aux Cayes, and Mapou Danpinse at Léogane.

Other fearsome beings such as the *zendeanpo*—human cannibals—also gather in the mapou to conduct their affairs.

Against all these creatures, and against black magic in general, there are many magical protections, the most common of which is the *garde corps* (protect the body), or simply the *garde*. It is usually obtained from a bocor and consists of a small bag of mysterious ingredients. The owner wears it around his waist or around his neck. Sometimes it is merely a cord with a number of ritually made knots. The garde corps is made to prescription and protects the wearer against specific things such as a lou-garo, poison, or death from a bullet or knife. In describing a garde corps he had prepared for a client, a bocor revealed that it contained dried chicken blood, extract of *wari* bean, and *gris-gris* powder, among "a thousand and one" ingredients. The *gris-gris* powder is made from a dried *gris-gris* bird.[2]

There is another form of protective magic, broader in scope, called the *arrête*. It is used to protect not merely an individual but an entire household, or even a group of households. In addition to warding off supernatural creatures and protecting people against assassins, the arrête is a neutralizing agent against various forms of black magic such as the ouanga and the *makanda*. The arrête bundle or object is hung in the house or in a nearby tree, or it is buried somewhere on the grounds. Sometimes it is nothing more than a pointed stick placed in a certain way before a door or gate, or at one side of the trail leading to the

[1] Simpson, "Haitian Magic," Social Forces, October, 1940, p. 97. Cf. p. 351, category 116. --Analyst]
[2] [For footnote, see category 116, p. 351. --Analyst]

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1954) 1960 SV3 11681 SV3

mâché carriage or on papier-mâché horses, make their appearance during Rara as well as on the Day of the Kings (*Les Rois*).

Among the traditional paraphernalia carried by Rara groups are coconacaque sticks, cha-cha rattles, metal rattles called *tchatcha*, a set of rattles on a tall thin pole (called *jonjonjon*), candelabra bearing candles or oil lamps (*lampions*), banners and flags, and such miscellaneous musical instruments as the *grage* scraper, bamboo scraping devices, the *kanze* finger drum, *assots* (beating boards), and various kinds of secular drums.

The general tone of Rara is nonreligious. The dancing is free from the decorous restraints which characterize most religious ritual, and some early observers of the festival were shocked by what they saw. Some of them went so far as to attribute Haiti's dense population to the "licentious activities" and reckless abandon of the spring carnival. The Catholic Church and some political administrators have sporadically sought to suppress Rara, along with Vodoun ritual. And even today in Port-au-Prince the foreign visitor often is urged to watch the elite Mardi Gras with its floats and mulatto queens as a substitute.

Although Rara has an over-all tone of secular abandon, it has links with both Catholic and Vodoun ritual. Good Friday is given over in good measure to miming the story of Jesus and Judas. A perambulating band may carry an effigy of Judas hanging from a pole. Another will burn the Judas effigy, or drag it in the dust as the crowd moves along the road. In another group a man playing the part of Judas may crawl on his hands and knees along the trail, while Jesus' avengers pursue him with long, cracking whips.

Tying in with Vodoun ritual, virtually all Rara drums and other paraphernalia are "dedicated" or "rededicated" before Lent in special *boumfor* services. And on the last day of Rara, usually late in the night, prayers are said, the *lwa* are called upon, and some of the festive paraphernalia is thrown into a fire to be consumed.

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3
[P. 112-DD]

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[796]

42. *Forged iron "saber" of the loa Damballa, from a houmfor near Léogane. Height, 32 inches.*

43. *Forged iron standard for holding ritual objects, from a houmfor in the region of Léogane. Height, 18 inches.*

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[796]

[534]

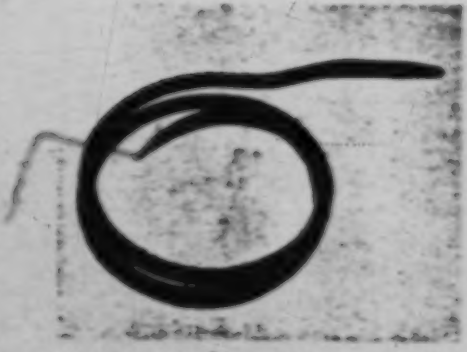
44. *Ancient iron figure of the loa Quinçon Fer, from a houmfor near Léogane. Height, 12 inches.*

45. *Old iron ritual bell, or agan, from a houmfor in southern Haiti. Height, 21 inches.*

46. Forged iron rod in the stylized form of a snake, representing the loa Damballa, from southern Haiti. Height, 34 inches.

47. Iron sculpture on a Nago altar of a houmfor near Gonaives, representing a bird sitting on a tree.

48. A sculptured iron standard in a houmfor in the Cul-de-Sac Plain.



49. Forged snake, representing Damballa, from southern Haiti. Length in coiled form, 9 inches.

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3
[P.112-FF]
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50. *Representation of the lwa La Sirène, made by a contemporary blacksmith.*

51. *Representation of the lwa St. Jacques by the same blacksmith.*

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3
[P.112-HH]

706
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54. Inside surface of a calabash bowl used in rituals of the houmfor, painted in black and white. The figure represents the graveyard loa, Baron Samedi, with a pick, shovel, and tombstone. Length, 15 inches.

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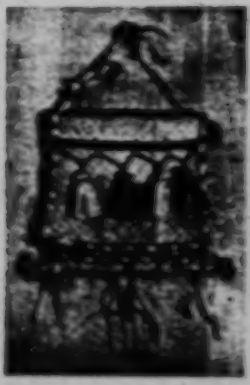
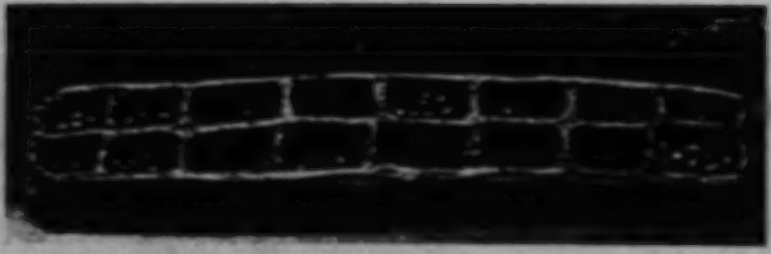


55. An ajfor cousin, the traditional peasant knapsack.

524



56. Wari board cut from a mahogany log. Length, 29 inches.

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

[P. 112 - N]

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a. A Vodoun altar in northern Haiti, scarcely distinguishable from a Catholic shrine. Houmfors range from the simple to the complex, from the poor to the rich, from the primitive to the sophisticated, and from the bizarre to the artistic.

[794]
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b. Altar in the houmfor "Société de la Belle Jeune Fleur" in Port-au-Prince dedicated to the loa Petro Mano. The cross surmounted by the skull represents the deity. Behind the table, leaning against the cross, is the pestle with which this loa "grinds" his enemies. On the other table are razor blades for Petro Mano to eat.

[P.112-0]

● 778

22. *An assortment of stones (Indian artifacts) from the altar of a houngfor in the mountains above Jacmel. All are regarded as thunder stones thrown to earth by the loa Sobo and Kébioso, or as stones containing the essence of other deities.*

793
787
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142
302
416

23. *A houngan of southern Haiti divining with the aid of his asson, bell, and (right) gourdo.*

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

[P. 112-V]

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516
776
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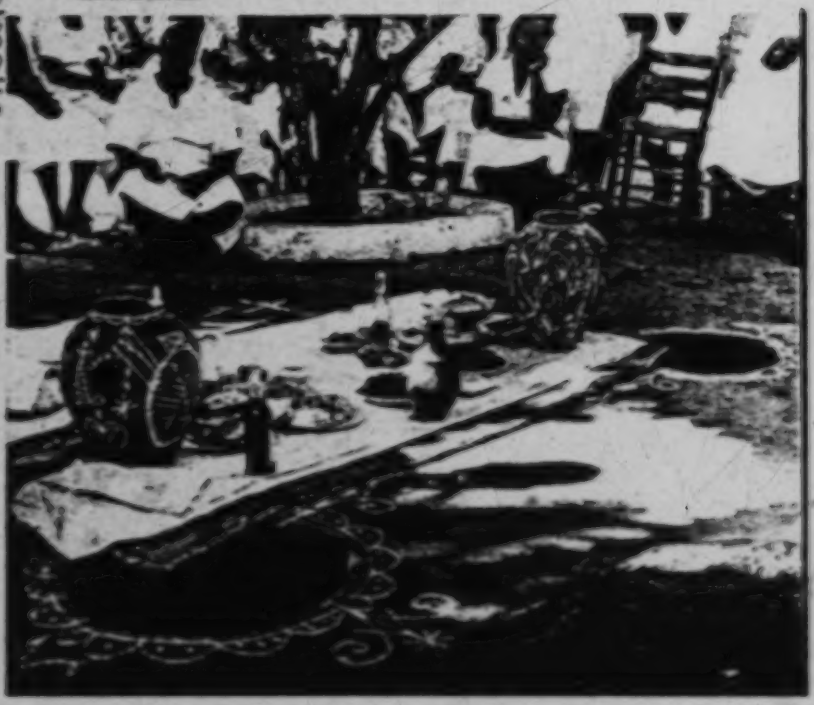
415

30. An Ibo ancestor in the Cul-de-Sac Plain. Laid out on the mat is a feast for the Ibo lua. The houngan ritually feeds the deities by placing food in the holes at each end of the mat. Designs on the pots are the symbolic patterns found generally in vévés. The tree in the background, surrounded by a low curbing, is sacred to the lua.



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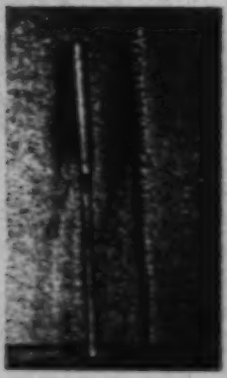

86. *The dentâ, or notched scraping stick.*

87. *Sacred calabash rattle from northern Haiti.*

88. *The ichancy, a metal rattle used chiefly for secular music.*

[1178]

89. *A houngan's ason, showing network of beads and snake bones.*

90. *A Ju drum, showing method of lacing and the sliding rope tightener.*

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3
[P.112-X]
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33. *An ancient assotor drum, believed to have been made early in the nineteenth century. Seen faintly on the painted surface are a guinea hen and a palm tree.*

34. *An assotor drum in full regalia for a service in the Cul-de-Sac Plain.*

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532
778

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1965) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

And when the revolution came he produced for the Haitian armies knives, gun parts, and wheels to transport cannon. By the tens of thousands he made ingeniously devised metal objects to be thrown on the roads, before the French cavalry troops—objects so shaped that, no matter how they fell, a single sharp point stood erect to cripple the enemy horses. Yet knowledge of the West African uses of iron did not altogether disappear, and during the first century of independence the Haitian blacksmith created many old-style knives, spears, and ritual objects for the cult temple.

Even today, some of this old-style work is to be found in houmfors in the southwestern peninsula. One may see simple or ornate iron standards, made to support ceremonial offerings or candles, strikingly similar to standards in ancestral shrines in Dahomey. There are iron bells, both single and double, made in pure West African style; ornate ritual swords and sabers which are the crests of certain deities; coiled and uncoiled iron serpents representing the gods Damballa and Ayida; and stylized or semirealistic portraits of the deities. Many of these old pieces are nineteenth-century survivals; others have been forged within the past decade. [2] [5]

An over-all impression of Haitian material culture is that artistic decoration is almost entirely absent and that the prime emphasis is on utility. Wooden cooking spoons are efficient in form, but missing from them is the delicate decorative carving often found in West Africa. The long wooden washing bowl, or *gamelle*, and the wooden mortar in which grain is pulverized are likewise clean-cut but stark and plainly utilitarian. Clay bowls, bottles, and storage jars are usually of simple, uniform design, with only accidental variations; there is little use of glazes, and the clay is often heavy and thick. Should there be a warri gameboard in the peasant hut, the chances are that it is roughly made, without legs or carved designs. Dugout canoes are usually crude in appearance, heavy and thick-walled, and irregular in form.

Yet there are many evidences—though one must seek them out—that esthetic impulses are quite alive. The gay peasant straw knapsack, or *sifflet*, without which no mountain man makes a journey, has a charm and grace that is not diminished by familiarity and cheapness. Decorated with sisal braid and tassels, and colored with green and magenta dyes, each *sifflet* on close inspection appears to be unique. In some communities in the south and southwest, burlap squares also are painted with these traditional dyes. About forty inches across, and made of sugar bags, these paintings swarm with geometric patterns and sometimes with figures of flowers and animals. They are purely decorative, being

[2] [See plates 42-51, pp. 112-DD—112-FF. --Analyst]

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1965) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

used for wall hangings much as appliquéd cloths are used in Dahomey. Near Cap Haitien, in the north, ceramic workers make crude clay figurines of roosters, pigs, dogs, cows, and people. The "purpose" of these figurines is obscure, but it is likely that they are intended for use in Vodoun ritual, a number of them having been observed in hounfors in the vicinity of the town of Grande Rivière du Nord. In some mountain villages, canes carved with animal and human heads are commonly seen. Nor is the tradition of carving gourds and calabashes, popular in various regions of West Africa, altogether forgotten. The *cayambonque*, a divided calabash with the top ingeniously cut to fit into the lower part so as to form a sealed container, is sometimes covered with carved geometric designs, usually crude and haphazard but on occasion meticulous. Until recent years the common *cha-cha*, or gourd rattle, was similarly carved.

Most of the visible traditional art is to be found in the environs of the cult temple. The inner walls of many hounfors are covered with ritual designs and symbols and portraits of the deities. On the altar, sometimes, crude wood carvings of deities are seen, along with forged iron objects, carved maraca bowls, and grotesquely shaped drumsticks known as *baguettes guinée*. All the wooden objects are characterized by a plainness that relegates them to the category of purely functional and expendable things. The wood carving of a deity is not an image, it is a representation; it can be sold or otherwise disposed of, even thrown away if infested with beetles, and another object can be used to replace it. The only concern of the cult priest in this matter is that the deity concerned should understand the situation properly and not take offense. Thus there is no strong feeling that the wood carving should be a realistic representation or that it should be "beautiful." One relatively antique wood carving, completely West African in style, was found some years ago in a hounfor near Léogane and is now in the collection of the Musée du Peuple Haïtien in Port-au-Prince (see fig. 57).

One of the most flourishing arts of the hounfor is the *vévé*, or ritual drawing made on the earth in the course of a service. Most commonly these beautiful and ornate designs are made with white meal or flour, and in a few of the cults, primarily the Pétro, lampblack and red brick dust are also used. The vévé is made by the houngan or the mambo. With sure, practiced movements, the cult priest allows the meal to trickle through his fingertips onto the ground where the rites are taking place, usually in the peristyle of the hounfor itself. The drawings he makes are composed of a multiplicity of cabalistic symbols—heart shapes, stars, interlocked V's, flags, abstract phallic forms, crosses, swords,

3: Courlander B-S (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

Rara season two special rattles are used. One of them is made of metal and resembles a tin can with a wooden handle. The metal sometimes is perforated with numerous small holes, and inside are *kokoli* seeds, which act as rattlers. This instrument, known as a *tchancy*, is usually decorated with colorful ribbons when in use. (In northern Haiti the term *tchancy* is used to designate metal wrist rattles worn by drummers.) The other Rara rattle, called *jouroujou* or *jourjou*, is made of three gourds carried on a long pole. One of the gourds is affixed to the end of the pole, and the others are fastened to the terminals of a short crossbar, giving the effect of a cross with bulbous ends. Since many of the Rara processions are dramatizations of the Christ epic, the instrument could be interpreted as a Christian symbol, though its conversion into a noisemaker appears to be an African conception. The *jouroujou* may be a variant of the small rattle-cross which is used by the Abakwa secret society in Cuba.[9]

The sacred gourd rattle of the cult priest is called *asson* or *hakyor*. It is pear-shaped and covered with a network of beads which act as external strikers. It is used by the houngan to summon the spirits of the dead, to praise or call upon the deities, and to accompany the performance of magic. The asson is of West African derivation, and its counterparts are to be found among the cults of Martinique, Trinidad, Cuba, Brazil, Venezuela, and elsewhere where African traditions have left their mark. The gourds from which the assons are made are grown in a special grove sacred to the loa.

A large calabash rattle has been reported from several isolated regions of Haiti, primarily from the north. Some rattles of this kind have been described as more than twenty inches in height and covered by a network of external strikers, usually wari beans. The calabash rattles are used in groups of three. They are shaken and thumped against the palm of the hand, producing both deep and high-pitched sounds. These oversize rattles are employed without drums and are said to be associated with Arada-Nago rites. They appear to be a survival of the instrument known among the Yoruba as the *shékéré* and are found in Cuba in both Dahomey and Lucumí (Yoruba) cult centers.

Probably one of the oldest of Haitian folk instruments is the earth bow, known as the *tambour mariengouin*, or mosquito drum. Traditionally the mosquito drum is made in the following way:

A hole is dug in the earth, perhaps a foot or more deep. It is covered with palm or banana bark, which is pegged firmly all around. A cord is attached to the center of the bark membrane and drawn taut to a bent green sapling, one end of which is buried in the ground at a slight angle. The cord is plucked and stopped with the fingers of one hand, while

[9] [See Courlander, "Musical Instruments of Cuba," Musical Quarterly, Apr. 1, 1942, pp. 233-24 Cf. p. 354, Category 116. -- Analyst]

2: Courlander 8-6 (1937-1968) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

[The Vodoun Pantheon]

Agassú Towuvor, also pronounced Awusá Tosuvor. Another thunder lwa. Alwusá (or Aghwusá) is the name of an ancient capital of Dahomey.

Badessa. The wife of Sobo Badé.

So Nawusor, also called Sogo Nasosue, or simply So. A thunder lwa of Dahomean origin. In Dahomey he is regarded as an offspring of Mawu and Lisa, and a member of the Sky pantheon.

Kévioso, or Kévioso. A thunder lwa who, like Sobo, hurls stones to the earth. In Dahomey he is known as Xevioso and is thought to be the same deity as So. In Haiti, persons killed by lightning are thought to be enemies of Kévioso and are given special treatment in burial.

Aguê Woto, known also as Coqui-Nan-Mia. He is a lwa of the sea; thunder and lightning over the ocean are thought to be Aguê shooting his cannon. He is usually symbolized in pictures by a sailing or steam vessel. His colors are blue and white, and the primary sacrificial animal for him is a male goat. High ceremonies for Aguê are begun in the houmfor and consummated in a sailing boat on the open sea, from which is launched a highly decorated and stylized miniature ship containing food for the deity. This tiny craft is known as the *bateau d'Aguê*. Houmfors honoring this spirit usually have a small boat hanging from the rafters. In Dahomey, Aguê is also a sea deity and a member of the Thunder pantheon.

Anwitto Woto. She is thought to be Aguê Woto's wife, though in Dahomey she was considered to be his daughter.

Anwitto Wawadon. Said to be the son of Aguê.

La Sirène. Another deity of the sea, a lwa-mermaid visualized as a mermaid. La Sirène is usually thought of as belonging to a separate family, though she is frequently served along with Aguê. Some ascitiés do not recognize her as lwa.

Nanamkoulou, or Nanan Boulougou. A lwa of herbs and medicines. In Dahomey this spirit was considered the grandparent of all deities, the progenitor of Mawu and Lisa from whom all demigods are descended. She is still remembered in the Dahomey cults of Cuba.

Lisa or Lasa. Probably the Lisa of Dahomey, child of Nanamkoulou.

Attibon Legba, or Legba Sé. One of the most important of Haitian lwa, frequently the first one invoked in any service. He is the guardian of the gateway, the crossroads, and the highway. Cocks and male goats are his favorite foods, as in West Africa. In Dahomean tradition, Legba is the youngest offspring of Mawu and Lisa, the progenitors of all Dahomean deities. He is a divine trickster who is both feared and loved, a force that is capriciously malevolent or benevolent. Today, as in earlier times in Dahomey, the image of Legba, made of clay, stands or sits before the entrance to many villages. Sometimes the image is nothing more than a mound or column of earth symbolizing a phallus. Legba's mischief and tricks are directed against the other deities and human beings. In Haiti, as in Dahomey, Legba is not a personal deity. As Herskovits points out, Legba has no "character" and cannot be relied on. He is the intermediary between mankind and the deities. It is in this sense that he "opens the gate," providing a channel of communication between man and lwa; and it is for this reason that he is often supplicated first in religious ritual. In Dahomean lore, Legba's mischief is often in the realm of sex. In ritual dances for

[illegible] [Ibid., pp. 101 ff. Cf. p. 354, Category 16. --Ed.]

2: Coulander 8-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 HA21 SV3

[The Vodoun Pantheon]

any iron object, such as a sugar vat. In West Africa, Changó (or Shango) and Ogoun were considered separate deities. In Nigeria, according to Ellis, they were brothers, closely associated with each other. Among the Yoruba, Changó was a thunder-and-lightning god and he is believed to have been one of the early kings of Oyo. The African Changó, like the Haitian, is identified with fire, a corollary of lightning, and persons possessed by him may carry pots of fire on their heads and perform other fire tests.[1]

Changó Gbaa. Another manifestation of Ogoun Changó.

Ogoun Bachanon. Possibly the same as Ogoun Changó, or he may be named after the Bachangos, a Congo tribe. A warrior and ironworker.

Ogoun Balindo. One of the Ogoun family.

Ninsso Ninsso. One of the Ogoun family.

Argoland, Acolland, Cosard, or Cozard. One of the Ogoun escorts, sometimes called Ogoun Cozard, or Cozard Bacoa.

Ogoun Yoroum. One of the Ogoun brothers.

Ogoudja, or Batalla. A loa of war. Among the Yoruba people of Nigeria, Ogoudja was a sky deity and protector of the town gates. He was thought to form children in the womb and was therefore believed responsible for albinism and congenital deformities.[2] Ogoudja and Changó are among the main Lucumí (Yoruba) deities in Cuba.

Ogoun Ferraille. An aspect of Ogoun who functions as a gateway guardian.

Ogoun Blanc (White Ogoun). He does not drink rum, which is a favorite beverage of his brothers.

Ogoun Jean.

Ogoun Jhaka, Jhaal, or Yhaal. A warrior and ironworker. Jhaal may have been a shrine or regional designation.

Ogoun Kloda.

Ogoun Kleanne.

Ysaad, or Ogoun Lond. Brother of Ogoun Badagry and the other Ogouns. *Ysaad* is clearly of Dahomean origin.[3]

Ogoun Panama, or Ogoun Palama. Guardian against somnambs, or spirits responsible for somnambs. A brother of Ogoun Badagry. He is usually seen wearing a Panama hat.

Ogoun Pierre Noirroue

Ogoun Rouge (Ogoun Red Eyes). A malevolent Ogoun brother, red eyes being a mark of bad behavior. Some people feel that he is a member of the Petro rather than the Vodoun pantheon.

Nain Pimont. A member of the Ogoun escorts. He eats hot peppers.

Bayakou Nain

Gédé Nimbo, or Nimbo, also called Baron Gédé. One of the powerful deities of the Vodoun pantheon, particularly in the region of Port-au-Prince, where many homeless center ceremonies to him. Gédé Nimbo, along with his numerous brothers and his vast escorts, is a "dead" loa, a spirit of the graveyard, a sexual rascal, and a violator of propriety. He is served apart from the other loa, and usually he has a separate altar or shrine outside the central hounfor. Cult centers for Gédé are often near graveyards, though not necessarily so. Gédé services abound around the main cemetery of Port-au-Prince. Gédé Nimbo has various manifestations, but he is usually

[1] Ellis, The Yoruba-Speaking Peoples, p. 49; W. R. Bascom, in Introduction to Pecot's Olóòrun Stories of the Yoruba, pp. 1-3, 4 (New York: Ethnic Folklore Library, 1950). Cf. p. 554 Category 116. — Analyst

[2] Ellis, The Yoruba-Speaking Peoples, p. 51 ff. Cf. p. 359 of M. —

[3] Ellis, The Ewe-Speaking Peoples, pp. 91 [illegible], Dahomey, pp. 37-1, 39 Cf. p. 304 Cat. — Analyst

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Maly' Gbeno Gonon (Master of the Highway). Probably Legba.
Mazuno. Believed to be the spirit of the famous hounsi Mukandal, who lived during the revolutionary period. He is symbolized as a snake which lives in the ground. Some informants think he is a Petro rather than a Dahomé lwa.
Mazuno Çeça
Tijuan Dawun (Ancient Tijean)
Wuyuan Wazo. Whydah is the name of a nearest town in Dahomey.
Xo. A fire deity of clear Dahomean origin.
Chango
Oke, or Okoboo. Known also among the Lucumí cults of Cuba. May be any one of the Changos mentioned by Herskovits.
Okoboo Lélé
Omegaté
Papa Dumond
Pedro Bumbo. This lwa is sometimes identified with St. Peter.
Pedro Dambalah, Dambalah, or Dumbalah. Sometimes identified with St. Peter.
Pedro Wazo. Related to Whydah Wida.
Pueda, or Puedo. This name is probably a tribal designation.
Sabata. Described as a lwa of ancient times. Sabata or Saghata is the so-called smallpox group of deities of Dahomey.
Silia. A female deity, thought by some to belong to the Exile Fidda family.
Silibo Gwlo. In Dahomey, according to Herskovits, Silibo is an ancient city-founder.
Silibo
Tahwah
Ti Cana. This is a "false name"; this lwa keeps his real name a secret.

THE AMBIVALENT SIMBI FAMILY

This group of lwa in certain regions has attached itself to the Vodoun pantheon, elsewhere to the Congo-Guinée pantheon; but it has not maintained any kind of independent or semi-independent status. The deity Simbi and his family are of Congo origin.
Simbi. A male deity, patron of rain and drinking water. Said to be the father of the Simbi brothers.
Simbi Dlaire. The best known of the Simbi family. Like his father, he is the patron of fresh water, is associated with the spring, and usually is symbolized as a snake. The color sacred to him is white. Altars to Simbi Dlaire usually are found at the spring or the well. Sometimes ponds are constructed for him within the houmfor.
Simbi Kotto
Simbi Trembleu, or Simbi Nan Dlo Lauru (Simbi in Two Waters). Symbolized as a water snake who lives in the "upper" waters and the "lower" waters.
Chango Simbi. The patron of Simbis, and ancestor of the entire family of water lwa.
Simbi Twou Lolé (Simbi of Three Islands)
Simbi Mazuno
Simbi Gbono Bois (Simbi of the Forest)

Ref: [illegible], The Eye-Speaking People, pp. 91-94. Cf. p. 354, Category 116.--Analyst

2: Courlander 8-4 (1827-1868) 1900 892.Hebi 892

Chapter 5: *Services for the Loa and the Family Ancestors* (pp. 47–74)

[1]Now that the bangan and the lapine are performing services normally performed by the *petit service*.

[2]Herskovits, *Dahomey*, II, 169.

[3]Parsons, *Spirit Cult in Hayti*.

[4]Account given by Jean Raoul Pierre.

[5]Informant: Albert Kofi Prempeh, Ghana.

[6]Account given by Yolande Salnave. A. W. Cardinall notes in his book *Tales Told in Togoland* (p. 62): "Trees are in most cases treated with respect. Before a man does [illegible] one for a canoe he must invariably draw nutrition to its spirit and apologize for the [illegible] he is about to do it."

[7]The rite of *rafraîchi* she is conducted periodically for a *mait'* she after the original [illegible] and community. The purpose is to "refresh" the loa and make him content with his [illegible] residence in the land of the dessus.

[8]Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past*, p. 113.

[9]It is of interest to note the perseverance of traditional attitudes toward water rites in certain Negro cults in the United States. River baptism often is attended by certain mixtures in familiar form.

[10]Odette Mennesson Rigaud, "Notes on Two Marriages with Vaudoux Loa," in Appendix A of Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, p. 284.

Chapter 6: *Songs of the Peristyle* (pp. 75–96)

[1]This theme is further commented on in chap. 13. Compare with the following excerpt from a Surinam song reported by Herskovits in *Suriname Folk-Lore* (p. 682):

I have no mother there,
I have no father there,
I have no sister there,
I haven't got anybody there.

Chapter 7: *In the Mapou Tree: Magic, Demons, and Conjure* (pp. 97–114)

[1]Simpson, "Haitian Magic," *Social Forces*, October, 1940, p. 68.

[2]Note the coincidence of the term *gris-gris* or *grigri* as used in the United States, where it has the same meaning as magic, or "conjure" charms.

[3]Simpson, "Haitian Peasant Economy," *Journal of Negro History*, October, 1940, p. 309.

[4]Herskovits, *Dahomey*, II, p. 243.

Chapter 8: *Mardi Gras and Rara: Jeggines, Mayguins, and Kings* (pp. 115–125)

[1]Leiris, *La Haïti*, p. 46.

[2]Performances of this kind have been observed in both East and West Africa and are well known in the region of Senegal. I saw a plaudite masquerade, virtually identical with the Haitian version, in the neighborhood of Khartoum, Sudan.

Chapter 9: *Land and Work* (pp. 126–138)

[1]Franklin, *The Present State of Hayti*, p. 360.

[2]Herskovits, *Dahomey*, I, pp. 81, describes Dahomean polygamous marriage in its various forms. Although Dahomean plural marriage is complex in terms of gifts, obligations, and

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proper control, as they should be. If an unwanted god persists in mounting an individual, the pertinacious one is commanded to go away or the victim himself is sent home until he can recover his own personality. Many people strongly resist possession when it is imminent. Judged by our own standards, possession of the Vodun variety could certainly not be called normal; judged by Haitian standards, however, it would be absurd to call abnormal an experience known and approved by the majority of the community.[19]

Possession occurs either at the service or at the dance. Here again the white man has nothing in his religious experience to enable him to comprehend the pattern of Haitian religion. The service corresponds nearly enough to the Catholic Mass or to more realistic sacrifices in ancient Jewish rites, but neither of these faiths nor any other the white man knows well has dancing for religion's sake. In Vodun, however, the dance is of equal importance with the service.

In the tiny *hounfort* (also spelled *hounfor*) of the priest, which is little more than a hut with earthen floor, the service begins. To call this structure a temple is at once to make it too imposing and to confuse the white man in his attempt to understand the scene; it is no more of a temple than was a tiny primitive early Christian church. Most hounforts in Haiti would be crowded if twenty people were present. At one end is an altar, more or less resembling the high altar in a Catholic chapel; on it are placed a crucifix, flowers, candles, fruit and food, wine, lithographs of Catholic saints, and whatever other objects, Catholic or Vodun, local practice may dictate and individual taste prefer. Upon the floor are traced formal cabalistic patterns, generally in corn meal, both to fend off evil influences and as required by the particular loa. The officiants may be male or female or both. To the service ordinarily come only the members of the family and their specifically invited guests; neighbors and friends will attend the subsequent dance.

A student of Catholicism would find in the first part of the service a great deal of ritual borrowed from the Church. The blessing, genuflections, making the sign of the cross, responses, and the like, all clearly show a Catholic background which accords well with certain objects upon the altar. Imperceptibly the strictly Vodun element obtrudes itself. The loa are asked whether they will accept

19. The statements of the two sides of this controversy may be found in Dominguez, *op. cit.*, throughout, and in Herskovits, *op. cit.*, particularly pp. 146–147.

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565 711 ing since 1860 has had its effect upon the children of the upper classes. Two hundred churchmen working with a population of more than two million cannot distribute their benefits equally. Teachers must devote themselves to those whose minds are educable, who have access to schools, and who can afford time for daily classes. An element of social snobbishness entered as well. Catholicism was socially accepted in the Western World whose approval the élite coveted, where Vodun if known at all was regarded as a mere superstition. To prove his separation from the peasant black, the élite person was therefore Catholic or nothing.

[711] It would have required many times two hundred teaching brothers and sisters, all with the zeal of fanatics and the energy of dynamos, to convert the masses away from Vodun. In acquainting the peasants with Church forms and certain beliefs the priests have been entirely successful; in making exclusive Catholics of them they have had no success at all.

711 177 Every vital social institution is continually in a process of change. Vodun, a very living faith, has steadily borrowed more and more from Catholicism, the only other religion with which the people come in close contact. When one can go from a Saturday night Vodun sacrifice and dance to a Sunday morning Catholic Mass with no feeling of incongruity, it is obvious that the minds of the worshipers are actively predisposed to assimilation of creed and ritual.

716 We have suggested in a previous chapter some traces of the Catholic Mass in Vodun ceremony. The Vodun service regularly begins with a long ritual which the observer who knows both the Créole language and the Catholic liturgy recognizes as being almost entirely Roman. While the Vodun houngan sits quietly by, a special officiant known as the *prêt' savanne* (bush priest) reads or pretends to read from the Catholic prayer book. For the Pater Noster, the creed, the Ave Maria, the Salve Regina, and the prayers, the worshipers kneel or stand as they would in church. Candles burn, water is sprinkled, the sign of the cross is made, the chants are sung. When the benediction completes this part of the service, the houngan takes over to conduct the purely African rites; yet his first words are, "*Grâce mise'-cordé*," and many Catholic interpolations appear even in this second part of the service.

[778] [192] The Vodun ritual is conducted before an altar, in Haitian Créole called a "reposoir," which is a perfect marriage between Vodun and

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Catholicism. I have seen such an altar, with its adjacent table, bearing a crucifix, candles, (holy) water, lithographs of the "Assumption of the Virgin," "St. George and the Dragon," the "Adoration of the Kings," and certain unrecognized but distinctly European saints; in addition to these objects, however, were such unecclesiastical articles as bananas, rice, beans, squash, various bottles of drinks, and plates of food. Near by were the sacrificial animals.

Vodun makes use frequently of one sacrament of the Church—baptism. Needless to say, this rite is not a monopoly of Christianity, and its use in the folk religion may very well have come from Africa. Constant witnessing of the rite in church must nevertheless have influenced its adoption for all important Vodun ceremonials. The drums used in the dance are baptized; so also is the first loa to possess a devotee; at many other special times the rite is likewise performed, generally with a set of prayers which invoke Catholic saints and Vodun loa alike.

Mention has already been made of the identification of Rada and Pétro loa with certain saints and martyrs of the Church. Such identifications are not uniform, but vary in different parts of the country. Legba is generally associated with Saint Anthony, but often (and to the Christian, more understandably) with Saint Peter who traditionally guards the gates of heaven; the Virgin Mary quite obviously is related, whether as Queen of Heaven, as the Sorrowing Mother, or as the innocent Virgin, with numerous manifestations of Maîtresse Erzulie; Damballa, whose symbol is the serpent, is sometimes Moses (whose brother's rod became a serpent consuming other serpents, and who by lifting up a serpent in the wilderness cured the people of their snake bites) and sometimes Saint Patrick (whose association with snakes is well known). Other identifications are numerous, showing the penchant of the people for combining what they know of both religions.[2]

Many of the loa have, like the Catholic saints, their symbols, their special days, colors, and other associations. Some like white, some red; the serpent, the rainbow, the crossroads are among the symbols; sacred days occur weekly, Tuesday being Legba's, Wednesday Ogun's, Friday Erzulie's, and Saturday Baron Samedi's. It may be

2. The distinguished Haitian ethnographer, sociologist, and historian, Dr. Jean Price-Mars, has made a list of some of these identifications in his *Ainsi parla l'oncle*, pp. 180–181.

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798 chapel, wended their way down the hill and across to a clearing
796 among the trees. On the way many of the women stopped beside
177 the path to pluck a handful of long grass or reached up to break twigs from the smaller trees. At the clearing, primitively decorated with colored cloth, the priest made a short discourse; then he intoned three times, "Notre Dame d'Alta Gracia," and the worshipers, raising their wisps of greenery above their heads, rustled the twigs until the air was filled with a sound like the hissing of many serpents. "*Priez pour nous!*" they responded each time to the rustling accompaniment. The Virgin of Alta Gracia is the miraculous saint of Higuey, as much renowned among Haitians as among the Spanish-speaking Dominicans farther east. The supplication to the Virgin is proper enough to a Catholic feast, but the hissing, reminiscent of Damballa, is an intimation that the Vodun loa is not yet forgotten on his holy hill.

This festival of Notre Dame d'Alta Gracia shows not only the adaptability of Catholicism to Vodun, but likewise that of Vodun to Catholicism. Not even with the will to preserve their faith and practice pure can most men resist the infiltration of surrounding beliefs; in Haiti, the will to resist is itself lacking. This the Church knows, and counts upon for ultimate victory. In other words, there is to be not precisely a conversion of worshipers away from Vodun, but a slow transformation of Vodun itself into a true Catholic faith within the hearts of the people.

In its long experience in adaptability, the Church has in many a country learned to establish a ground of common understanding with lowly folk, while keeping its touch with aristocrats. Following the principle that where a belief or rite is apparently ineradicable it is advisable to turn it to Catholic uses, the Church in Haiti has often made this kind of adjustment, just as in earlier times with the Aztecs, Mayans, and other continental American Indians. An example of it may be observed at Saut d'Eau, near Ville-Bonheur.

787 Here, near the centre of Haiti, in 1884 there appeared in a palm
778 tree the vision of a beautiful Virgin blessing the people. She re-
798 mained so long that according to tradition the whole countryside saw her. The parish priest, unwilling to permit this obsession of the people to continue, came to drive away the apparition. The Virgin departed, apparently of her own will. People saw her no more, but many came to the palm tree and were miraculously cured and

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marvelously aided in distress. The priest, not willing to allow even this "delusion," tried to cut down the tree but was wounded by his own machete. Eventually, however, the tree was destroyed by natural causes, and a church erected on the site. Fire destroyed the church. Each successive church building has likewise been destroyed, by fire or by lightning. No longer now does the Catholic Church combat the sanctity of Saut d'Eau: after all, it was the Virgin who appeared, not a loa. The great celebrations on every fifteenth of July draw pilgrims from all over Haiti. Although the Church now grudgingly approves the feast it is still recognizably Vodun in character, for devout souls who bathe in the water are "mounted" by loa. The Church has a hard battle ahead of it to win this festival for Catholicism.

Three factors work in favor of the Catholic struggle to win Haitians completely away from Vodun: the world-wide organization of the Church, which can always throw trained reserves into the battle; the superior intellectual equipment of the priests, enabling them to plan their campaign and use psychological weapons; and the plasticity of Vodun itself, which is a conglomeration of human feelings, ideas, and traditions rather than a rigid sect with an inflexible ritual.[1] Even with these advantages, it is still the battle of a few dozen men on one side with the Haitian masses (more than two million) on the other. So far as one is ever justified in prophecy, it seems safe to assume that Vodun will continue to assimilate more and more fragments of Catholicism; that its appeal will remain so long as education and medicine are not extended to the whole countryside; that eventually—it may be centuries hence—Vodun rites may sink back into the status of living folklore, to which the simple turn in their deepest need.

One of the strongest missionary advantages of the Roman Catholic Church has been the breadth given it by two thousand years of experience. In so long a life it has had to be all things to all men; out of necessity it has developed around the central core so wide a variety of belief, doctrine, form, and traditional practice, that there is something for every believer, whether scholarly or untutored, powerfully important or humbly obscure. What the cultivated

1. The absence of any written formulation of Vodun must certainly be a factor in its flexibility. Recorded tradition and written history tend to create definiteness of pattern.